jeevadhara

CONFLICT
SPIRITUALITY

Edited by
Felix Wilfred

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CONTENTS

Editorial

The Italian politician Aldo Moro was very adept in coining phrases to give expression to unusual political realities and experiences. One such celebrated expression of his was *convergenze parallele* — parallel convergences! With this linguistic game he tried to articulate some kind of practical collaboration among political parties diametrically opposed to each other. Is the title of this number of Jeevadhara: *Conflict Spirituality* a play of words?

There is a reason for this question. For, the reality of conflict and the realm of spirituality are generally considered to be two incompatibly different worlds. One may therefore see in the general theme of this issue an attempt to bring near to each other two opposites. But on closer study of the contents, the reader will find that, far from being opposed to each other, conflict is part and parcel of any germane spirituality. Conflict is no less a universal human experience than spirituality.

Painful experience though it is, conflict leads us closer to truth by disturbing our self-possession, unsettling our certainties, our values and our very mind-set; it lets us experience a true transforming catharsis through the dissenting and disconcerting voice of the other. It should therefore go into the very texture of our spiritual tapestry. This is how conflict is lived out in the spiritual journey of people committed to social transformation, or in the life of any family that continues to grow together.

There is another equally important dimension to conflict. Conflict could be there because darkness battles against light. Withdrawal from this battle is sheer cowardice. And cowardice should not be canonized as spirituality ! The fibres of the spiritual being of the prophets were drawn from the thick of conflicts with the powers of evil and darkness. And that is what the life of Jesus exemplifies in a singular way. In the Indian tradition itself the most sacred of writings, the *Bhagavadgita* is the example of a spirituality forged in the battlefield to conquer *adharma*. And Gandhi's own political involvement for ¡national liberation was simultaneously his biography of conflict spirituality that found contextual ways and means to overcome the evil and its power.

It is this vision that permeates the various contributions of this number as they try to reflect on some of the aspects of the general theme. The issue concludes with a reflection on the new spiritual foundations we require today in a world of conflicts. It is hoped that these essays will find some echo in the readers, and provide some stimulus for their personal reflection or for discussion in groups.

Facing Conflicts Is My Journey

The author, a religious sister, reflects on the various stages of her spiritual journey marked by conflicts, and her own growth in solidarity with the poor through the acid-test of struggles for liberation. These experiences have led her to appreciate conflicts as something creative and constructive in any authentic spirituality that is characterized by commitment to the poor and the downtrodden.

Spirituality is the inner dynamism of the human person. Human spirit is energised and empowered to act as living extensions of God's self-giving love in and through spirituality. The function of spirituality is to liberate people from injustice and exploitation. It is essentially a spirituality of justice and liberation, and it enables us to work for and establish human dignity and justice in society.

Conflict spirituality enables us to face challenges and risks. It often demands of us great amount of self-giving while participating in people's struggles. Maintaining the tension, yet at the same time being rooted in spirit is the unique characteristic of conflict spirituality. A deep contemplative consciousness and a deep rooted faith in God are basic to conflict spirituality. Justice is central to conflict spirituality because all conflicts have their roots in injustice.

I have had to experience conflicts in my life for the sake of a meaningful existence. The struggles and challenges in my journey have implications for the establishment of a just society. Hence in this article I would like to highlight some of the salient features of conflict spirituality experienced in my journey.

Struggles in my journey

As I look back I can locate four distinctive sources of experiences which have shaped and determined my present stage of the journey. They are the new types of formation experimented:

social work studies; association with PALMERA; and Kulithalai . experience.

I should begin by recalling my early experiences as a young girl zelous and active in the pious associations of my parish. I found myself drawn towards issues of justice in and around the parish. It was in marked contrast to the spirituality of the people at that time, which was rather inward looking. This initial experience in the parish has gone deep into my person. I am inclined to think that this early experience in and invitation to areas of conflict in human society was a major factor in the appeal I had for the new kind of formation.

During the early years of my formation, the sessions on social analysis and the new thrust of the I.C.M. congregation, inspired by Vatican Council, challenged me to have a different perception on the formation programme itself. My friends and I began to express our determination to be true to the radicalism of the Gospel and to the renewal thrust in our religious life. This did create tensions and yet we decided to leave the secured and sheltered formation in order to be part of the struggling people in our neighbourhood. In concrete we decided to live as daily wage earners for a period of three months and maintain ourselves by that earning. We came together in the evening with our bodies, exhausted and aching, and shared our experiences; we reflected upon them in the light of the Bible. We found our reading of the Bible quite different and challenging and began to discover new dimensions of the Gospel.

I could see the Christian and religious life in a new light with a renewed fascination for it, and I found this a nourishing and sustaining experiment. It was rewarding but quite risky. In fact this way of life taught me what it means to be a labourer and I was drawn to be part of the labour force. My critical thinking and analytical mind grew fast towards a radical transformation of the society. My commitment to Christ and my social responsibility were increasingly sharpened. To launch out my programmes, to discover possibilities of direct participation in the struggles of the rural poor was a serious and genuine search during the initial stages of my religious life.

Working in the slums of Bombay was the next memorable phase of my journey. As a student of social work in Nirmala

Nikheten I was assigned Dharavi slum for field placement. The condition of the slum was beyond description. Human misery and degradation in the slum was quite shocking and yet challenging. It left deep impressions on me and confirmed the direction of my life and singled out my mission.

Soon after my studies, I became part of PALMERA (People Action Liberation Movement and East Ramnad) Team. A new chapter in my life opened up when I entered actual human situation in rural Ramnad of Tamil Nadu where the PALMERA Team worked. Theoretical knowledge acquired during my studies at Bombay was tried out in the field. The rich and vast experiences acquired in PALMERA prepared me to take the initiative in Kulithalai where I am placed now.

Every human person has a right to a decent living and equal opportunity in all spheres of life in society. The primary goal of development is humanisation, which aims at rediscovering the lost human image and dignity, especially of the poor. The greatest truth about human person is that he/she is a thinking person who is capable of loving and making decisions.

Hence one can discover the socio-political situation in which one lives and works for the creation of a more human and just society. This is possible only through organising and conscientising the oppressed masses. Hence, organising a mass base for a long term struggle should be the strategic objective of social action. To realise this struggle a strong cadre group has to emerge from the grass roots.

Keeping this as the base, social action ministry was initiated at Kulithalai Taluk in 1987. Our area of operation is full of wet land and it is cultivated throughout the year. Half of the agricultural work force belongs to scheduled caste group. A recent sample study conducted on "an occupational experience of women in agriculture" showed that 93 per cent of the women agricultural labourers live under the poverty line. Availability of cheap labour is exploited to the maximum by the landlords.

In my work at the grass roots level I began with the formation of a core group in the parish. Systematic generation awareness programmes were planned and implemented for the youth of the area. They began to critically look at the Church in

its daily existence, and the catholic youth challenged some of the Church practices.   Tensions mounted between the Church authorities and the youth.   This situation occasioned much reflection and sharing.   Gradually the scope of the core group enlarged with many more lay people joining the group.   A movement called KALWY (Kulithalai Action for Liberation of Women and Youth) emerged eventually.   KALWY identified it's target group: the landless agricultural labourers, marginal and small farmers, gem cutters and the weavers.   Various issues have been taken up by KALWY, such as mobilising the poor people to demand their socio-economic and political rights.

At present, KALWY is engaged in organising the entire masses through village *sangams*, educating them through training and issue-based actions, conducting periodic reviews and reflections.   Issue-based education focussed on radical transformation of the society.

My active involvement in the Parish organisation made me go deeper into the exploitative practices within the Church, religious congregations and society.   Though it cost me dear as a young girl I determined to break the family ties, names, customs and culture; I chose religious life as my source of strength and a way to work for justice.   I experienced tension and helplessness within me, and yet I tried to discover possibilities of a new mission.

My inner self certainly went through a series of tensions, struggles, helplessness and challenges.   I got angry with the exploitative structures and power-holders.   It had great impact on my person.   Though at the initial stage I was confused regarding my work for the liberation of the oppressed masses, my constant search gave me certain clarity and hope to enter into the lives of the oppressed poor and to participate in their day-to-day struggle.   All these experiences are reflected in the following case study.

Gudalur women's struggle for land and shelter

Gudalur is a harijan hamlet in Kulithalai Taluk of Trichy District, Tamil Nadu.   About 112 families live in 93 huts.   They are deprived of all facilities and have a very poor socio-economic profile.

Nearly two acres of land was acquired by the state Government in 1966 to provide housing sites for the people of Gudalur. But the people occupied only a portion of the land (92 cents). *Pattas* were not issued for the occupied land or for the rest of it. It is entered in government document as a harijan colony. The unoccupied land was being used by a landlord who already owns more than 40 acres of wet land. The people of Gudalur are daily wage labourers working on his land. In 1975, the land was visited by Government officials. It was measured and divided among the families of Gudalur. But the landlord filed a writ petition in the high court against the Government's action. The dispute was not settled until 1988, when the case was brought to the notice of the KALWY.

KALWY prepared Gudalur men and women for this struggle for two years. KALWY activists and Gudalur women played a crucial role throughout the struggle.

On 17th November evening the landlord brought 7 men to guard the land and the paddy that had been just harvested. KALWY activists and the people forcibly took them to their colony and put up a hundred huts in the land. The police arrived but found themselves helpless. On 19th, the people were called to the Taluk office for a compromise. The people, aggrieved by the proceedings, staged a walk-out. On 21 December, around 200 Reserve police invaded the area and removed the huts put up on the disputed land. The Gudalur women in their turn began camping in the vacant land, cooking and sleeping in the open. They continued to stay there for the next 18 days, exposed to heat and cold. The landlord brought to the spot, a lorry-load of armed men. But the people were prepared for any eventuality. 40 villages joined together and conducted a fast in front of the Taluk office. Another compromise talk was held at which the Government officials orally assured the Gudalur village representatives that an alternative site for their colony would be provided within three months, failing which they could again occupy the disputed land. District collector submitted a proposal to the Government of Tamil Nadu on 22-2-92 to allot 4.35 acres of land. Government passed an order alloting 4.35 acres of land. The landlord immediately got a stay order from the High Court. The landlord started growing banana plants. After waiting for more than an year, people distroyed 2000 plants and put up 80 huts. Police

force entered into the land and arrested women, men, students and children.

The entire struggle was led by KALWY, People were bailed out. The struggle united the people and they became strong. Every conflict and struggle brought inner strength and the neighbours began to realise their collective strength and the power of Gudalur people.

The Gudalur struggle has been a watermark on the growth Chart in the consciousness of the people of this area. They have become more bold and confident. They are much more aware of the social process. Their solidarity has grown. There is also a new respect for them from the people of other castes and the landlord. The event is of great significance to the women of Gudalur. In many ways it was their struggle. Today they are an immensely empowered lot. They have tasted victory. They are confiden' that they can now take up issues that are much more important to them and shape their destiny as women.

Elements of conflict spirituality

Living and participating directly in the struggles of the people, I found myself growing with a new understanding of religious life. The prophetic role of the religious challenged me to be with the people. Through constant inner search and struggle I discovered a new understanding of prayer life, community life and religious life. My lived experiences, convictions and values brought new perceptions in my life and I began to experience inner peace within me.

In my active participation in the struggles of the people, I faced a lot of challenges and critical moments in which I experienced God's presence. To stand with the people who are oppressed is a challenge. The established values in the society, even in our Christian community and religious community and the many expressions, practices and beliefs in the Church are constantly challenging. These aspects became increasingly a feature of the new spirituality.

Crossing the conventional borders in the society and the Church, to participate in the struggles of the people led to conflicts with several structures, values, practices and interests. This became a daily experience and a common feature of my spirituality.

Such conflicts, however, bring with it deep satisfaction, internal peace, growing conviction and hence, a growth in faith in a new form. Hence, it is creative in affirming life, witnessing to Christ, promoting new values, critically analysing society and entering into a life of solidarity with the oppressed for their liberation.

Conflict spirituality is people-oriented and not result-oriented. Social action ministry is evolved from people, from their needs and life situations. What emerged from my concrete life context is the source and material for prayer. Prayer is to be in touch with the depth-dimension of oneself and the reality. This spirituality involves a lot of sharing, discussions, reflections, and acceptance of risks, criticism and threats even to the point of facing physical and psychological aggression.

Conflict spirituality is affirming life to the extent of total liberation of the marginalised poor. It is also a spirituality of tension and hope. Every struggle, every tension brings new hope. Therefore it is not a futile or worthless struggle, but a meaningful one. Hence, struggle is hope. It is never a failure; it is creative; it brings people together and builds them up into a community.

Social action ministry means being political. If we are leading a demonstration to secure the rights of the poor, it is an open social and "political" action. While participating directly in people's struggle for a total transformation of society we are forced to challenge and to critically look into the present political, social and economic structures. Naturally we are forced to take a political stand, for a just social order. Such political actions shapes a spiritual being.

Conflict is an important element in our life. It provides great opportunities; opens up ways and means to critically look at persons, groups, congregations, church and society. Certainly conflict leads to systematic action plans, reflections and reviews. Persons and groups involved in this process are forced to struggle. Each struggle brings serious consequences. I am inclined to believe that conflict spirituality is capable of bringing about change in the society and gradually leads to the experience of the dawn of God's kingdom.

Kulithalai   Agnes

Social Conflicts and Spirituality

Starting from the undeniable fact of serious conflicts in society,
the author reflects on how a Christian or a Christian community
needs to face this reality. In this regard he brings examples from
the history of the Church, and studies the social teaching of
the Church. He concludes offering some insights for a proper
understanding of reconciliation.

Speaking in the abstract, one can say that humans live in
one world. But concretely speaking, they live in two different
worlds — the world of the dominant and that of the dominated,
whose interests are ever in conflict. The reality of social conflicts
today can be observed at several levels: conflict between the
economically rich and the poor, the politically powerful and the
powerless, the caste people enjoying social status and the Dalits
discriminated against, the oppressive and the oppressed cultures,
male-chauvinism and female-subjugation etc.

The reality of social conflicts has to be encountered by any
genuine spirituality. For, spirituality is nothing but the depth
dimension of every reality. Relevant spirituality will find signs
and foot-prints of God in every reality of human existence — cos-
mic (ecological), socio-political (structural), inter-personal (rela-
tional), and intra-personal (depth dimension). For God pervades
and permeates every reality. Hence the reality of social conflicts
falls within the purview of true spirituality.

How does then christian spirituality face social conflicts?
Christians who are socially committed are confronted by the pro-
blem of such conflicts today. If they take sides with the poor in
these conflicts, are they not going against the reconciliatory and
peace-loving ministry of the Church? On the other hand, if they
ignore these social conflicts or compromise with them, is not their
spirituality escapist? These are the questions this short article
attempts to answer in a very modest way.

Divided world

Our world (society) is divided into two great groups – the owning group and the working group. The owning group controls the means of production and the working group sells its labour to the owning group and makes a living out of it. This division is considered to be primary by some social scientists, and they call these opposing groups as classes.

The deeper reality of this division is that the owning class has power over the working class. The economically rich nations have power over poor nations. The rich man has power over the lives of those who are poor. Those who control the livelihood of humans control the humans.

Even more, our present economic, political and social structures at national and international levels support this division. The rich people make use of the existing system to increase and maintain their wealth and power. Thus they get ever richer and more powerful on the one hand; the poor on the other are mercilessly exploited and crushed through the existing structures, institutions, laws, courts, police, army, policies etc. In short the prevalent system is against the poor. The poor get relatively ever poorer and are less able to control their own future[1].

Conflicting world

The interests of the owning class and the working class are in direct conflict. The owning class wants to extract the largest possible amount of surplus value from the labour force. But the working class tries to reduce as much as possible the profit of the owning class. The result is conflict, struggle, confrontation, and revolt between the two.

Those who are economically powerful become also politically powerful. They rule over the masses and dictate terms to them. But the powerless want power to be decentralised and shared. The caste people use all possible means to keep the Dalits in subjugation with the help of the state machinery for their own advantage. But the Dalits use counter-force to assert their human dignity and secure greater justice. Thus two worlds are in conflict. Male domination forms part of this conflict.

1   Julius K. Nyerere, An address to the Maryknoll Sisters' General Chapter' New York, 1970

There is now the growing imperialistic tendency and effort to bring the whole world under one order through institutions like the multi-nationals, trans-nationals, world bank and international monetary system. It means there will be one central control. Corresponding to this new world order, an attempt is made to bring about a global monolithic culture. Naturally, this one world order and monolithic culture are in conflict with existing local orders and cultures the world over.

Functional analysis of society would see these conflicts in terms of problems which can be amicably settled through goodwill, reasoning, dialogue and compromise. But for structural analysts, social conflicts are not simply peripheral problems to be solved through dialogue and compromise. It calls for radical change of the existing socio-economic and political system where a few enjoy life at the expense of many who are exploited. Unlike individual conflicts, social conflicts are between two classes in society, and they are inherent in today's capitalistic/imperialistic system.

Conflicts born of social commitment

Those committed to the liberation of the poor, work in solidarity with the poor and try to change this world into a better world to live in. These people face opposition from all those who enjoy the benefits and comforts of the present system. These are often branded as 'anti-social elements'. Their social commitment to the poor becomes the cause for social conflicts in their life.

Conflicts arising from social commitment are also seen in the church. Those who wield power in the Church at various levels, stress obedience and submission to Church's doctrine and direction. But those working with the poor in the periphery of the Church specially in the Third World are becoming more sensitive to the Spirit, who ferments history and calls people to commit themselves to transform today's world. When these respond to the Spirit in deep social commitment, the official church often blocks their praxis, their critical and creative reflection. Creative fidelity to the Spirit in history (dynamic spirituality) and liberative ministry in view of the new world (Rev. 21:1-5) are in conflict with the more static understanding of the official church.

"It is possible to neglect the spiritual and pneumatic dimension of the church and transpose sacredness to the structures themselves. In this process a structure can attempt to supplant the mystery of the church by surrounding itself with a mystique of its own"[2]. Here whether to obey the official church or the call of the Spirit is the conflict[3].

Church on social conflicts

Church's thinking on social conflicts can be traced from its spiritual traditional practices and its social teaching.

The Fathers of the church, specially Shepherd of Hermas, Tertullian, Basil, John Chrysostom and Ambrose vehemently spoke against the rich in favour of the poor. Though they did not have the structural understanding of society, they saw a kind of casual connection between the poor and the rich. In their thinking, the rich were in some way responsible for the poverty and misery of the poor. One of the reasons why they were very strong against the rich was that the church itself was poor. So it had the moral strength to confront the rich after the example of Jesus[4].

When the church began the process of compromising with the original, radical message of Jesus to suit the rich and the powerful, some strongly reacted to it. They went to the deserts to live the Gospel in its radicality. These are known as "Desert Fathers". Though they did not make much impact on the society, their revolt to remain faithful to the radicality of the Gospel message is to be appreciated.

The post Constantine spiritual trend exhorted the poor not to revolt against the rich, but to gratefully receive alms and charity from them. It also appealed to the rich to be generous in their charity to the poor, for God has entrusted riches to them so that they may help the poor. By helping the poor, the rich would inherit heaven. Here the social conflict between the rich and the poor seems to be ignored. One of the reasons was that

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2   Felix Wilfred, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, Tiruchirapalli, 1988, p. 302

3   See *Acts* 4:19–20

4   See Samuel Rayan, "Christian Response" in J. Murickam (ed), *Poverty in India — Challenges and Responses*, Bangalore, A Xavier Board Publication, 1988, pp. 117ff.

by this time the church became wealthy. Hence, it was not sufficiently open to the Spirit in favour of the poor.

Revolt in the middle ages

Seeing the luxurious way Pope Eugene III lived and dressed, and the way he exercised authority in the Church, St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) revolted strongly against it. He wrote that the Pope looked more like the successor of King Constantine than that of the poor fisherman, Peter.

Another great saint was Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). The feudal system of his time was giving way to a commercial society. The feudal lords and big merchants were called 'Majores', which means the big ones. Francis was born in a Majores' family. He saw that the Church was scandalously wealthy and the papacy was tyranically powerful. Against this background he declassed himself and inserted himself into the group of the *Minores* (the small, the poor) and adopted a poor evangelical life-style. He remained open and faithful to the Spirit who upheld his life as a great protest inviting the Church to conversion. Assisi's life was in conflict with the life of the official church, which could have expelled him.

There were also other movements like the 'Valdanesians' and the 'Poor of Lombardi', which sided with the poor and fought against the official stand of the church which had neglected the poor. The church branded them as false movements. Who calls whom false? Who remained more transparent to the Spirit and its action? The church or the people's movements? In the midst of protest and conflicts, these people's movements helped the church to be faithful to God's Spirit operative in the society. Sometimes it is more through these conflicts (charism), the church was able to better witness to Jesus' Gospel message.

Social teaching and conflicts

Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) and subsequent social teaching of the church took greater notice of the social conflicts between the rich capitalists and the poor miserable workers. For Leo writes in *Rerum Novarum*: ''. .. a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself''[5]. He wanted 'some

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5 R. N. 3

opportune and quick remedy for this misery and wretchedness
pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class'.

How did the Pope and the Church meet social conflicts ?
For Leo, society was a living organism with head and members.
The well-being of this organism depended on mutual co-opera-
tion. He clearly asserted it in his *Humanum Genus* in 1884. Any
demand or desire for social equality was chimera or impossible
fanciful idea. Humble obedience to the state (which was divinely
empowered) was the social virtue par excellence. Authority-obedi-
ence dialectic was the cornerstone of social life. ''Just as religion
requires the worship and fear of God, so also it demands sub-
mission and obedience to lawful authority: it forbids any kind of
seditious activity... Religion cares for the poor with every form
of charity...''[6].

It did not mean that Pope Leo did not want any social
change. Rather he wanted social change, but without disturbing
the social order. He admitted strikes as means to claim just rights
of the workers. But if they are a threat to public peace, civil
authorities were duty bound to intervene to uphold peace[7]. Thus
the church was a strong believer in bringing about social change
through co-operation rather than social conflict. It was on the
basis of religion and spirituality that Pope Leo refused to san-
ction radical social conflict in order to change society. It was on
the same score, he ruled out any kind of violence to effect social
change[8].

Pope Leo advocated harmonious and peaceful living among
conflicting classes in the society. Though Popes Pius XI and XII
saw social conflicts much more clearly than Leo, they repeated
Leo's response with regard to social conflicts. Concretely speaking,
the idea of harmonious living indirectly supported the *status quo*
in favour of the capitalists.

Recent social teaching

The recent social teaching clearly recognises and painfully
admits social conflicts. It suffices here to refer to a couple of
texts.

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6   *Quod Multum* (1886) as quoted by D. Dorr,   *Option for the Poor – A
    Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, N. Y., Orbis Books, 1986, p. 32
7   R. N. 53   ,   8. R. N. 30–32

Populorum Progressio vehemently condemns capitalism which is the cause of dehumanising poverty and misery on the one hand and scandalous affluence on the other, causing tension and conflicts between the two groups[9]. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* says that 'poverty, unemployment, shortage of food, the arms race, contempt for human rights and dangers of conflict loom large in our contemporary world'[10].

Bishop's Institute for Social Action of FABC notes "We are aware that many of the initiatives suggested by christians in the area of social justice lead to conflict. Yet conflict is a sign of growth"[11]. World Council of Churches adds that the way to "peace, liberation and justice... often makes conflict necessary... All choice requires sacrifice, all change requires struggle. That is the message of history as of the Gospel"[12]. Finally our Indian Bishops say "God's plan is at work in the struggles and aspirations of the country's people, liberating from all forms of material social and spiritual alienation"[13].

Response to social conflicts

How does the catholic Church respond to social conflicts? I think the present Pope, John Paul II clearly spells it out in his speech in Brazil: "To reject the class struggle is also to opt resolutely *for a noble struggle* in favour of social justice"[14]. To cite again from his encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: "Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, *without recourse to violence*, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities"[15]. The church seems to suggest noble means of personal conversion (spiritual or/and ethical) or noble solidarity action with others to meet violent and inhuman social conflicts[16].

9 P. P. 35
10 S. R. S. 49
11 BISA V, as quoted by John Desrochers in *Building a New India*, p, 127
12 *Ibid*
13 CBCI, Calcutta, 1974, Introduction
14 *Ibid*
15 S. R. S. 39   16. S. R. S. 41-42

The church's social doctrine is not a third way between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism. Its main aim is to interpret realities of the world in the light of the Gospel. It condemns all evils and injustice and proclaims good news to the poor[17]. The social praxis of the Church in the face of social conflicts would still appear to be escapist to a great extent. For it says ''We have no models to present''[18]. The church too easily assumes the possibility of social harmony. It seems to believe that all that is needed is to get the social classes together into human solidarity for conflicts to cease[19].

Down the centuries the church has spent too much time and energy to maintain the *status quo* than to listen to the Spirit in creative fidelity and humility. In spite of all talk about renewal and updating, the Church is still not able to realistically respond to the concrete problems of our world, specially the poor[20]. The Church still lives to some extent in isolation and alienation from the hard realities of the present world of the poor. One such reality is social conflicts. The present rigid, pyramidal church structures, its riches and its mode of exercising authority — these are some of the reasons why the Church is not always sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit.

Social conflicts and confrontations are necessary and healthy elements today in society and in the Church. As the World Council of Churches puts it, 'this is the message of history as of the Gospel'. One should wish that social conflicts become permanent elements inside the Church so as to bring new inspiration and impulse to constantly renew the church[21]. They will challenge the church to open up to new realities, situations and aspirations of the people, especially of the poor.

Our model for conflict-spirituality

Jesus becomes the model for christian spirituality. We will now try to see how Jesus lived the life of the Spirit in the face of social conflicts of his time.

17 S. R. S. 41   18. C. A. 43
19 John A. Coleman, *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought – Celebration and Challenge* – N. Y., Orbis Books, 1991, p. 39
20 G. S. 1
21 L. G 8

"First century Palestine was a class-structured society at every level. At the economic level the masses were fiercely exploited by the privileged. In politics, the priestly class supported by the great landowners, held the mechanism of state in their hands. Ideologically the ruling class imposed its ideology (essentially the system of purity), which was passed in diverse ways by groups, sects and parties."[22]

Going through Jesus' public life, one sees clearly that he took a definite stand in favour of the oppressed who are the target-people of God's Reign. Jesus confronted the Pharisees for paying no attention to justice, the legal experts for imposing intolerable burdens on the ordinary people, the rich for refusing to share their wealth with the poor and the leaders for their despotism.

Jesus' public life from start to finish was one of great conflict and confrontation. In the words of Samuel Rayan: "By and large the gospels are an account of Jesus' confrontation with structures and agents of domination, the scribes, the Pharisees and their law systems; the rich and their mechanisms of oppression, Herod and Pilot and the cruel imperialism they represent"[23].

From the life of Jesus it becomes so clear and evident that he did not escape or evade social conflicts of his time. He squarely faced them. His compassionate solidarity with the poor on the one hand and conflict with the powers that be on the other hand were the cause of his death.

Since the Father ratified Jesus' life through resurrection, the disciples of Jesus are to follow Jesus' social stand in today's world. A spirituality that does not take a definite stand with the poor against the rich and the powerful, and face social conflicts and their consequences is nothing less than a betrayal of Jesus' spirituality.

Reconciliation at any cost ?

Now it is time for us to answer the question raised at the beginning of this article. Is not reconciliation a christian virtue ?

22 Michel Clevenot, *Materialist Approaches to the Bible*, N. Y., Orbis Books, 1985, p. 50

23 Samuel Reyan, "Jesus and Imperialism", in Kappen (ed), *Jesus Today*, Madras, Aicuf, 1985, p. 108

Are not christians expected to be a peace-loving and peace-keeping people?

Jesus' love is universal in its object. It extends to everyone, and no one is excluded from it. But this love is differentiated in its action, i.e., it is expressed differently. 'Blessed are you poor' and 'Woe to you rich' are both expressions of Jesus' love.

It is one and the same love that leads Jesus to solidarity with the poor and conflict with all forces, structures and persons against human dignity, equality and justice.

Reconciliation, a beautiful expression of love, is not to be viewed in the same way in every conflicting situation. If there is a personal conflict, it may be rather easily clarified and persons involved may be reconciled. But it is not the same with social conflicts born of structural injustice.

One cannot reconcile good and evil, justice and injustice, holiness and sin. Evil, injustice and sin are to be done away with. One cannot say that injustice does not matter, conflicts must be reconciled at any rate. Conflicts are not worse evils than injustice and oppression. If one were to say that by all means conflicts must be resolved, no matter what happens to justice, then one does not understand Jesus' solidarity with the poor and the subsequent social conflicts he had to face. Nothing is more unjust than to reconcile oppressors and oppressed without attempting to destroy the basis of oppression. This will only perpetuate oppression and injustice. This is cooperation with sin. Cooperation with good is as much a Christian duty as non-cooperation with evil.

It is true that Jesus brought peace. But Jesus' peace is based on justice and truth (Jn. 14:27). There is no peace at the cost of injustice. "Concord is possible between murderers and thieves but not peace" says St Thomas. Jesus' peace is the fruit of justice.

Implications for today

We saw at the beginning that to be spiritual is to be open to every reality. Let today's realities enter into the cave of our hearts, to disturb us, to make us wonder, to question ourselves, to make us angry, to move us to action, to lead us to celebration etc. The most conspicuous reality today is de-humanising poverty

due to unjust structures and the violent social conflicts it generates. Genuine and authentic spirituality has to face this reality.

First of all christian spirituality has to respond to this reality actively and relevantly. This response invites christians to take definite sides with the oppressed as Jesus did. It means concretely that we support today people's movements and forces that are moving in this direction and participate in them.

Secondly as the synodal document on 'Justice in the World' puts it, liturgical celebrations and worship should be made to become instruments of nurturing and nourishing a new consciousness to create a new, just and egalitarian society[24].

Thirdly, we have our traditional and established exercises of piety. The content of these exercises is more individualistic, privatistic, mystic and other-wordly. We need to creatively work out spiritual exercises with more personal, social, prophetic and socially committed content to transform this world into the new heaven and earth in collaboration with people committed at the grass roots level.

Conclusion

The reality of social conflicts contained in Jesus' spirituality has to be seriously taken into account in today's social context. "Jesus has put before us the paradox that he came to bring peace and on the other hand, also disturb peace. Perhaps, if christians better understand the role of conflict within the total message of reconciliation, Marxists might also begin to think of their one-sided emphasis on conflict."[25]

I do not know whether there is spirituality in every conflict. But I do firmly believe that genuine christian spirituality today cannot but lead to social conflicts. Just because Jesus remained open and faithful to God's Spirit, he was in constant conflict with all dominant power structures of oppression, and sometimes with crowds, people, disciples and even with his own Father in Gethsamene. In the footsteps of Jesus, his disciples have to live a double conflict - social and personal - to remain faithful to God's vision and spirit of the new world and its realization through radical commitment.

X. D. Selvaraj

24 J. W. 58, 59
25 B. Haring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, London, 1979, vol. II, pp. 341-342

Religious Conflict and Spirituality

The article analyses the dynamics of inter-religious dialogue as
well as Intra-religious conflicts today. It links this analysis to
the understanding of spirituality as *sadhana*. It also formulates
certain basic principles which could be considered as compon-
ents of a relevant spirituality in the context of religious
conflicts.

Religion often seems to be a source of conflict. Hindu-
Muslim riots have become an annual feature in India. The
Christians too feel discriminated against and are some times at-
tacked. Strangely, even the religious majority feels threatened by
what it considers to be the aggressive posture of the minority
religions, especially those with origins outside the country.

Religious conflict, however, is not a peculiarly Indian
phenomenon. Religious minorities feel threatened in many Islamic
countries. There are tensions between Muslims and Christians in
some parts of Africa. The Muslims feel discriminated against in
many parts of Europe. The tensions in the Middle East may be
seen by many as a Christian (Western)–Muslim (Arab) one.
Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia are hot-beds of inter-
religious strife.

Within the religious groups themselves heresy-hunting has
been and is still a common phenomenon. Every religion has its
fundamentalist groups, its progressive streams and the middle of
the road majorities. Tensions, condemnations – e. g. Rushdie —
and discriminative practices - e. g. Leonardo Boff – are not lacking.

Religious leaders do preach peace. Organizations like the
World Conference on Religion and Peace continue their activities.
Prayer meetings and conferences at national, regional and inter-
national levels are becoming more frequent. This year (1993) marks
the centenary of the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago and

commemorative celebrations will not be lacking. Are these activities having an impact? What more could be done? What is the kind of spirituality that could animate such activities?

By spirituality I mean *sadhana* or spiritual praxis and the worldview, system of values and attitudes on which it is based. Spirituality therefore is both contextual and action-oriented, though it is guided by a vision rooted in a particular faith experience and commitment.

Religious conflict: an analysis

Looking at the various situations of religious conflict, one can distinguish between two types: inter-religious and intra-religious. Inter-religious conflict has often taken the form of the crusades, with a strong political character. Intra-religious conflict has gone to the extent of burning the heretics. However, religious conflict need not always be violent; it could take the form of more or less open discrimination or exclusion, which is denial of community.

Religious conflicts are not new in the history of peoples. What is new, however, is the social situation in which they are seen as undesirable and even wrong. The modern world is being progressively secularized. One of the consequences of secularization is the growing autonomy of the secular from religious control. Religion no longer provides the englobing meaning system through which one interprets the world. This function is now shared by the physical and social sciences as well as socio-political and economic ideologies. Religion is becoming a private affair. In such an atmosphere, religious conflict is seen as an anachronism — at least at the level of theory.

Secondly, thanks to colonialism and economic migration there is a great mixture of populations, racially, culturally and religiously different, who are forced to live together as one socio-political community. At the same time there has been a growing affirmation of fundamental human and social rights and freedoms. Religious freedom is one of these. Therefore any kind of oppression or discrimination based on religion is perceived as unjust.

Probably, provoked by these ideological and socio-political factors, religions themselves are facing up to the reality of pluralism and ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue has become an

accepted activity. In this context, religious conflict is seen as unwelcome, even as against the basic spirit of religion. The same attitude of dialogue is not shown to people who disagree in re-interpreting tradition within the community. The need for clarity and boundary perhaps over-rides the spirit of openness.

These very factors may be also among the conditions, if not causes, of religious conflict. Religious faith and commitment have an absolute and all-embracing character. They demand a total adherence and provide an integral world view. They are therefore resisting any attempts at privatizing them. In the con-text of the affirmation of religious freedom, oppressed and mino-rity religious groups are now affirming and celebrating their identity almost in an aggressive way. The tension between dia-logue and proclamation is a live issue not only among the Christians. Any true believer feels that he is on mission to pro-claim and to convert the other.

Religious conflict and society

A different kind of analysis of religious conflict could be made if we look at religion in its relation to other social factors. The relation of religion to society has always been ambiguous. On the one hand, it has been prophetic with regard to the existing social structures looking at them from the perspective of the Ultimate. This prophetic challenge of religion is mediated by a group of believers in society and could take a socio-political form and thus it could lead to a conflict at the socio-political level, but rooted in and leading to a conflict at the level of beliefs and their interpretations. An example would be the conflict around abortion in Europe and in the USA.

On the other hand, religion has also tended to legitimate existing socio-political structures, from slavery and caste to colonialism. While religion itself may have grown further to become prophetic in such situations, economic, political or cultural ideologies have known to use the legitimating characteri-stic of religion to promote the economic, political or cultural interests of a particular group. Communalists believe that people who belong to a particular religion have also common economic and political interests. Politicians have used the intergrating force of religion for political unification or domination. There

are many confessional States in the world, in which a particular religion has an official status, though freedom of religion is permitted. In such situations, minority religious groups feel excluded and may become communalistic, provoking, strangely enough, a majority communalism.

The phenomenon of communalism however points to a deeper problem. Religions, especially those that claim a special revelation, tend to promote a 'we-they' feeling. One group feels chosen and set apart. It is to protect such religious exclusivism that they sometimes use political means, which may remain defensive or even become offensive, when exclusivism is linked to proselytism. It is this desire to define and defend a social boundary in the name of religion that also accounts for the persecution of heretics, sometimes using also political coercion.

From the foregoing analysis of the situation, however brief and inadequate, we could set the parameters of our reflection on spirituality and religious conflict. Pluralism in the religious, as in other areas, is a fact. Pluralism, in the context of life together, leads inevitably to conflict. At the religious level, the conflict could be intra-religious or inter-religious. Inter-religious conflict can be at the religious level or could be a proxy for economic, political or even cultural conflict. Religious conflict may point to a conflicting relation within religion itself between its legitimating and prophetic dimensions, *The challenge for spirituality is how a believer can face this conflictual situation creatively and constructively so that personal and social growth is promoted.* A mere preaching of peace is not enough. The structural causes must be addressed. In the following reflections I am limiting myself to the religious sphere. I am reflecting primarily as a Christian believer, though my reflections will be largely relevant, *mutatis mutandis*, to any believer, since I shall be adopting an inter-religious approach. I shall first discuss the relation between religion and the secular society. Then we shall focus on the sphere of religion itself.

Religion(s) in secular society

One way of avoiding the interference of religion(s) in the social sphere is to affirm the autonomy of the secular in relation to religion. If religion deals with ultimate meanings and if the secular world has to be integrated in the overall project of persons

in society, then the autonomy of the secular can never be absolute. One could distinguish two levels. At the institutional level, the religious institutions cannot interfere with the non-religious institutions. Religious faith as such does not give rise to a particular economic or political ideology. But, while on the one hand, religion also should remain autonomous so that it is not (ab)used to legitimate any non-religious structures, it cannot, on the other hand, renounce its right to be prophetically critical of them in the context of ultimate perspectives.

However being prophetic with clarity and assurance is not easy. If we take the caste system in India as an example, it is the social ideal of a democratic system and the cry of the oppressed castes that challenge the legitimations provided by the various religions and help them to rediscover in themselves the roots of an egalitarian social order, witnessed to off and on by prophets and marginal groups.

Every religion is born and grows in a particular cultural and historical context. Such inculturation, while making religion rooted and relevant to a situation, is also a factor of limitation with regard to its social and cultural perspectives. Different religions with different contextual traditions encountering each other may be prophetic to each other in a process of mutual purification in attitudes, worldviews and systems of values. When the believers of these different religions find themselves in the same civil society their role of animation and prophecy faces particular problems. As long as they are ready to promote their particular point of view through witnessing, propaganda and persuasion there is no problem. But if they wish to impose their point of view by legal or other means of coercion then it could become problematic, because it will be resisted by other groups. The need then is to promote a consensus on basic human values that all wish to protect and promote in a given civil society. The universal declaration of human rights is one example in the international sphere. Such consensus may evolve historically in various ways. We need not go into them here. But what is important is that such a consensus is based on some common worldview and system of values which provide the criteria. Some would speak of the *humanum*. There is a supposition here that there are common human and spiritual values on which a

consensus can emerge. Some will base them on the natural law. Others might base them on God's common project for creation. But such a *humanum* would itself have to be rooted in the religious context of the various believers.   Secondly, it is not a static entity, but evolves with cultural and spiritual development.   Therefore the consensus will have to be periodically constructed.   At any given time a particular religion may make moral demands that go beyond the consensus, but it relies on persuasion and not on coercion.

With reference to our discussion of conflicts, we see that a conflictual situation between the religious and the secular sphere in the realm of values is inbuilt; that religions and ideologies are in constant interaction in building up a consensus;   that no one religion or ideology should try to impose itself by force, but must try the way of dialogue and persuasion.   Dialogue then is seen not as absence of conflict, but a creative, non-violent way of approaching conflict.   The conflict itself may never be completly resolved, but the process of dialogue makes it a creative and fruitful tension.   The process of dialogue also prevents the social conflict from becoming a religious one.

From the point of view of a spirituality one could think here of three principles of spiritual practice: the involvement of religion as prophecy in life, the openness to do so in collaboration and dialogue with other religions and the secularization of religion to the extent that socio-political conflicts do not become religious ones.   The question then is: Are the religions disposed so to collaborate?   This takes us to the discussion of inter-religious conflict for religious reasons.

Religions in conflict

The way to approach religions in conflict will depend on the manner in which one approaches religious pluralism. Religious pluralism is not new to India, nor is religious conflict.   There has been however an atmosphere of religious tolerance.   But such tolerance may have been based on the reality of a rigid social order.   Each new religion or sect became another caste and so was integrated into the wider social organization.   Religious practice in this sense was privatized and was not permitted to

challenge the social order.   The changing of social order from a
caste-based to an egalitarian society may be one of the reasons
for the emergence of religious conflict.

In the strictly religious sphere, tolerance was helped by
irenic theories that were either nominalistic or functional.   Some
said that God is the same, but is known by different names.
This does not take religious differences seriously.   Others said
that all religions lead to God just as all rivers lead to the sea.
This respects the differences, but considers them functionally
equal.   At the same time it discourages any sort of interaction.
If there is no interaction, there will be no conflict either. Some
Christian theologians speak of complementarity: religions are dif-
ferent views of the same Reality. If their perspectives only com-
plete each other in a holistic framework, then religions should not
have any conflictual relationship. All these theories deny the
possibility of conflict at the religious level. Conflict then is ascribed
to non-religious causes, which could be social or   personal.
All these seem to be too easy solutions to the problem of
pluralism.

Our starting point here is the experience of religious
pluralism which is conflictual, because their world view and value
systems are different.   How can we approach this situation
creatively ?

Conflict and dialogue

The first basic principle is our respect for the other as a
person with human freedom, dignity and rights.   This does not
mean that we may not disagree with that person on religious
matters. But it does mean that such disagreement is handled in
an atmosphere of dialogue, discussion, persuasion, with the pos-
sibility that finally we agree to disagree. There is no attempt to
dominate or manipulate the other.

The second basic principle is our respect for God. This
means that we accept God's freedom to relate and manifest God's
self to people in any way God likes, which may be quite un-
known to us. Secondly, however deep my experience of God is,
what I do not know about God is more than what I know about
God. A certain apophatism that looks on God as beyond all name

and form is part of Indian tradition. Such a two-fold awareness will keep us humble in our approach in the religious sphere.

A third basic principle is the realization of the absolute and the relative in the field of religion. Our relationship to God is or should be absolute. But this relationship is experienced and expressed in various symbolic forms characteristic of particular cultures and historical contexts. These expressions are obviously relative and limited, but mediate an absolute relationship. My encounter with another person at the religious level must help me to understand the relative and mediating nature of such expressions without questioning the absoluteness of my or the other person's commitment. My absolute faith demands that I proclaim it – but always with respect for the other. At the level of its expression in life, celebration and action there will be difference, even conflict. Human freedom to choose differently is also an element of tension. Given the rootedness of this difference in culture and tradition we must allow it to challenge us to deepen our relationship with God and with the other without seeking to evacuate the differences. The conflict then becomes a creative, not a destructive tension. One could envisage such tension, not merely between various religions, but also between various cultural and historical expresssions of the same religion.

This supposes a fourth principle. God is one and God's plan for the world is one and we see this not as uniformity but a unity in variety. This unity is a tension precisely because the people who represent the variety do not rise above it to perceive the unity. The unity then becomes the object of hope and trust and of a convergent movement with deep faith and commitment to God and God's purpose in history. The image of harmony may be more fruitful than the one of unity, since it combines pluralism with dynamism.

This profound unity in faith and hope supposes a fifth principle. In order to be fruitful and creative inter-religious conflict supposes that there is an ongoing attempt at purifying it from interference from non-religious factors and that conflict remains within the horizon of harmony. Thus, for instance, a fundamentalist group that is closed or aggressive is not open to dialogue and removes itself out of the process. One may regret the situation, but one cannot help it.

Conclusion

We have tried to see religious conflict as inevitable in the world as we know it, though it can be creative. The condition of such creativity is the commitment of all believers to the promotion of common human and spiritual values. This supposes a secularization of religion so that non-religious factors are not used to create religious conflicts. This supposes also a spirit of inter-religious dialogue that goes beyond mere exchange of whatever kind to the assumption of tension with the view of making it an occasion and a means of creative transformation in a horizon of harmony. Such dialogue can be sustained by common prayer in which, whether listening to the Scriptures of different religions or praying together in the presence of God, community becomes communion. This was the impact of the prayer meetings of Gandhi, which the fundamentalists found threatening. A basic sense of communion in the context of one God and one goal for human history is a challenge to collaboration, which does not exclude, but integrates conflict as creative tension.

M. Amaladoss

Gandhian Perspectives on Conflict-Spirituality

Following Gandhi, the author traces the origins of conflict in the different perceptions of truth which present but partial perspectives, as well as in the imperfect situation of our experience of faith, hope and love. Violence results when this partial vision and imperfect experience are imposed on others. As authentic spirituality in the midst of conflicts, *satyagraha* has the key for the transformation of the self and society, and it implies openness and dialogue.

Conflicts arise when interpretations and interests of two or more parties clash. They clash because they compete exclusively for the same object. In other words, each of them lays claim to the whole truth of the matter or to the whole benefit and its enjoyment. All claims to the whole truth or to the knowledge of the whole truth are acts of intellectual and cognitive arrogance and such claims to the enjoyment of the whole benefit are acts of self-centred possessiveness. They constitute acts of theft and privatisation of common property. These are the sources of conflict. Basically they relate to truth and its perception – truth about oneself, about society and the rest of reality. One acts on the basis of one's perception of truth. One's attitude to onself, others and the rest of reality is affected by perception and actions and relationships. Beliefs and codes of conduct and of right and wrong are determined by attitudes and vice versa. Hence the importance of understanding conflict, its origin and development and the way to its resolution.

It is interesting to note that Gandhi locates the origin of all conflict in the way truth is perceived; hence according to him solution of it lies in the way the truth should be and can be perceived. It is the difference of perception which accounts for

conflict. It is through unity of perception that conflict can and should be overcome. Since perception is conditioned by circumstances of persons, things, feelings, need, desire, habit, prejudice etc., of which one may or may not be conscious. Gandhi calls for great sympathy and forbearance in tackling the conflicting situations and the parties concerned. Resolution of conflicts will entail enabling the unconscious to become conscious of the forces at work which lie at the root of their conflicts.

Different reactions are possible and thinkable in any conflict situation. One is to run away from the conflict situation altogether and do not face it at all. Another is to let the other's interests over-ride one's own authentic interest. A third is to have one's own interest over-ride another's authentic interest. One may allow the second or third alternative either because one cannot help it or else because one is magnanimous enough to teach another through one's own example rather than through mere word. But it must be noted that there is no more virtue in suffering out of necessity than there is in a cowardly flight from the conflict. A last alternative is to resist the suppression of one's authentic interest by some one else's selfish interest, while being ready to face the consequence of the resistance. Two of the alternatives would be in tune with Gandhi's own, namely the conscious and courageous submission of one's own interests to another's and the resistance to the suppression of one's authentic interest. The last alternative would be the satyagraha alternative. But there are many conditions attached to it.

Even in allowing another person's interest to override one's own, one should beware lest the other person should sin against him/herself and, by one's connivance and acquiescence, should help him/her to indulge in sitting on the interest of others. One person's virtue should not encourage another person's vice. That which fosters vice anywhere cannot be a virtue in itself, because virtue cannot generate vice. Since this risk is there in so much that passes by the name of virtue and holiness, the strictly Gandhian approach to conflict is that of satyagraha. The risk in popular ''virtue'' and ''holiness'' is that in order to make one person authentic it makes another inauthentic. It makes one person's truth into another person's untruth. It is a partial and one-sided truth or partial authenticity that gives birth to partial

untruth and inauthenticity. This happens when one takes one's truth to be the whole thing and the other's truth as partial or nothing at all. It is when the part which is not the whole appears and behaves as the whole that untruth is born out of truth. In taking itself to be the whole while it is not, it has become in-authentic. When it expects or compels others to think and behave in deference to its assumed wholeness, it is inflicting violence on others, and violating their authenticity. Assuming that others lack truth altogether serves to rationalize the violent imposition of the dictator's truth. Every situation and institution of socia-lization is replete with instances of rationalized violence, irrespec-tive of whether the socializing institution is the family (the social system), the school, (the educational system), the church (the religious system) or the state (the political system). The authority of the institution is adduced to rationalise the violence or imposi-tion of one's perception on others. Even though it is an individual member or part that exercises authority, that individual lays claim to the position of the totality vis-a-vis another individual on whom authority is violently exercised and justified in the name of the totality. It is forgotten in the context that the institution cannot be the whole without the individual on whom violence is exerted. And it is by violence that the majority (many) seek to integrate the minority (one) to itself. These institutions tend to justify the imposition in terms of the good intention and the anticipated future internalization of the intended message or value by the presently recalcitrant individual. Gandhi himself was not free from such behaviour in relation to his wife and children. He was certainly concerned about violent conflicts between individuals, groups and nations. He thought out and proposed alternatives to violent conflicts. But with the exception of the state and some religions, he did not quite see that at the institutional levels of socialisation or upbringing lay the roots of the violence which manifested itself in conflicts at all levels. If he had seen this, he would have set himself to the task of devising alternative strategies of socialization to preempt the violence which marred social conflicts. Thus it can be said that this task remains a sequal to Gandhi's historic mission in the world. And this mission can be accomplished by applying the available insights of Gandhi to the diverse contexts of socialization.

This said, we may turn to the strongholds of Gandhi's approach to conflict resolution. This approach is characterized by optimism about humanity and its future destiny. Gandhi attached great faith and hope to that destiny. He was also deeply in love with it. Now, faith, hope and love are sources of energy which transform the situations on which they are brought to bear. Faith does it by imaging the alternatives or ways out of any tangled situation or conflict. Hope does it by the certitude or assurance that faith cannot fail and that therefore endurance of trials and sacrifices which are imposed on it are worthwhile. Faith gives the vision needed to resolve conflict. Hope gives the stamina to withstand the tests of faith. And love gives the freedom to rise above the anger and hatred engendered by trials and imposed penalties or sacrifices. It facilitates forgetting and forgiving of injuries and insults. It enables emergence above pride, prejudice and prestige. Together, they make for newness of life in harmony and concord. Thus the vision of faith becomes a new creation. And everything invested in and endured for it appears cheap and worthwhile. It is in the satyagrahic conduct of conflict to its resolution that Gandhi illustrates this re-creative power of faith, hope and love. So let us take a deep look at satyagraha.

Conflicts are a fact of social life. Their actuality points to the imperfection of the faith, hope and love of the parties to the conflict. In the perfect state of faith, hope and love, conflicts would not occur. Personally and socially we are worth what our faith, hope and love are worth. There is a direct proportion between the two, because these are the modes of spiritual beings or spiritual essences. But there are human acts and tendencies which make and keep us less human and spiritual. They are injury to life forms, untruth, nursing of anger, hatred, ill-will, revenge, illusion, possessiveness, greed, gluttony, licentiousness and egocentricity. These acts mislead their doer or the person driven by these tendencies into the false and erroneous supposition that he or she is the whole reality that can safely judge or mete out justice to every part of that reality. Hence that person makes his or her self the absolute judge and reference point of unity, truth, freedom, goodness and beauty and ignores or overlooks the social principles of equality and fraternity or community which is the totality. This act and tendency are in effect the

negation of God and the affirmation or placing of oneself in God's stead.

This is where Gandhi's definition of God as truth and truth as God comes as a corrective to the whole sinful behavioral and consequent social structure of conflict. This truth or God is that which is and simply is, independently of any mind or intellect that perceives or knows it. In this sense, truth is objective to any and every perceiving or knowing subject. In that independent truth, there can be no quarrel, dispute or conflict. Conflict only arises when truth gets related to subjects or turns subjective. The way out is not to keep the truth in its absoluteness or unrelated to conscious subjects. Rather the latter have to relate to the truth, realize the truth and become the truth and thereby overcome conflicts. Conflicts arise in the state of partial truthfulness, where truth and falsehood are mingled.

If God is truth, as Gandhi says, it would follow that the human being also is truth, because that being is a creature and child of God, but a truth in need of realization. The path of that realization is strewn with conflict between good and evil, between God and devil. The conflict is abetted by the I-sense, which in turn is fed by action (*karma*) or the sense of achievement, passion and ignorance or delusion (*maya*) brought about by these forces.

A truth in need of realization means growth in truth. This growth means outgrowing the limits which one's own standpoint and interest impose, and appreciating and identifying with others' standpoints and interests. This can only happen when one opens one's outer and inner senses to the other's standpoints and interests through internal and external dialogue. Dialogue is a process of two-way communication of talking and listening to the other so that two or more perspectives and points of view may meet and merge. What Gandhi calls Satyagraha is another name for the search and discovery of the greater and larger social truth through a process of dialogue. In fact, satyagraha is an action dialogue rather than a verbal one. And it presupposes on the satyagrahi's side a climate of faith, hope and love by which the other party is to be enveloped.

Literally, satyagraha means holding on to truth. It presupposes that one has already got hold of truth and should not lose that hold. But the fact and risk is that one does. And this gives to truth a dynamic character. Truth is in motion just like life. Hence the satyagrahi too has to have a dynamic hold on the dynamic truth. The motion of life is one of growth. The motion of truth is likewise in growth. Vital growth takes place through osmosis and symbiosis. Growth in truth takes place through our outer and inner senses in dialogue. It is permeability which makes osmosis and symbiosis meaningful. Likewise it is permeability which makes dialogue purposive and effective of satyagraha.

Conflicts point to blocks against permeability and create socially wider and wider blocks. As every one is more conscious of the speck in the other's eye than of the beam in one's own, the first step to remove the speck from the other's eye is to take off the beam from one's own. And generally it takes the other to tell us of the beam in our eye. Hence the need for openness and dialogue for growth in truth, and community between conflicting parties.

Though all parties to a conflict must enter into dialogue in order to resolve it, all may not be prepared for it. Some are closed to the other party's perspective and dogmatic about their own. They want the other party unilaterally to listen to them while closing their own ears to them. This is especially the case when the talking party is in power. Power blinds and deafens before it corrupts. Such is the tendency of power to effect mental and emotional closure towards those who are weak and uninfluential. What should one do in such a context to foster dialogue and communication ?

To make a non-listener listen to another, Gandhi advocates to the latter the pedagogy of non-listening or disobedience. If the non-listener starts listening from that point, it is the beginning of the resolution of the conflict. If instead of dialoguing and reflecting on why one defies and disobeys, the party in power takes to punitive or penal measures for disobedience, the disobeying one has to submit to the penalty without any anger or resentment at heart and only with love and prayers so that the penalty does not go in vain for the punishing party, but mollifies and softens its attitude to the disobedient and makes it search the

reasons and objectives behind the disobedience, how by its own irrationality and intransigence, it has precipitated the defiant to such disobedience. If then, it has to bring the disobedient to obedience, it can only do so by first listening to him/her. And first listening, it too will be listened to and obeyed. But the resultant situation and relationship cannot be the same as the initial situation and relationship which were conflictual and exploitative.

The reason for it is that the purification starts with the implicit confession of the satyagrahi that he or she has first contributed to or accentuated the conflict in the first place by obeying and cooperating with what was intrinsically inconsistent with truth and other values. The purification is effected in suffering (later) the invited penalty of disobedience. Because the satyagrahi blames himself or herself rather than the party in power, the latter too, is disarmed from self-defensiveness and self-righteousness and begins to acknowledge its share and fault in creating or worsening the conflict. This is the all-round purifying effect of Satyagraha. It brings all parties to confess the truth of the conflict.

Striking work is similar or parallel to civil disobedience as a pedagogy to make the unlistening and autocratic side come to a listening and dialoguing attitude. In listening and dialogue, there is no unilateralism, but equal respect and multilateralism where exploitation begins to disappear and violence and force make their exit.

In itself, spirituality pertains to the nature of God and the way God functions and deals with creation. On our part, spirituality is an imitation of the Divine essence and style of dealing with our social and over-all environment. To Gandhi, God is our model even in the way we are to approach and resolve our conflicts. The general counsel and exhortation of Gandhi in this regard is to cultivate devotion to God. "The highest goal of the devotee is to become one with the object of his devotion. The *bhakta* extinguishes himself and merges into, becomes, *Bhagavan*"[1]. Though all actions do create bondage, they will not do so, if the devotee dedicates all actions to God. When he has done so, they are no longer his own actions, but God's. The devotee is thus able to extinguish his self and the thought of "I" and to act always as

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1 _ *Collected Works* of Mahatma Gandhi: Vol. 41, pp. 125-28

in the great witness's eye. Because the "I" has been extinguished, there is no sin. Bondage is the result of "I" sense. Where this "I" sense is extinguished, freedom is attained from the passions of the ego and all their consequences. Such a person realizes that everything rests in Brahman including his or her own self. And "to realize that everything rests in Brahman is to attain to the state of Brahman. The *Jiva* becomes Siva"[2]. This is "self-denial" in its most radical sense, and a hall-mark of all authentic spirituality.

In his Vaishnavite tradition, Gandhi saw creation as the body of God and household of God: (*Vasudaiva Kudumbakam*, the Vaishnavite people) and all embodied life as the real incarnation of God, even though it was unusual even in that tradition to consider every living being as incarnation. Within this large body, family and household of God, there is an operative principle of subsidiarity in the sacrifice of the one for many, and of the less for more, of the part for the whole, of the individual for the family, the family for the community or village, the community for the country or nation, and the nation for the world at large. God is the spiritual source of the unity of creation. And since God is present in the whole body and household of creation, Gandhi claimed to "experience the truth that though many, we are all one"[3]. This makes for a communion in sin and sanctity. The moral consequence of this spiritual communion is that no one is competent to punish or even to sit in judgement over another. "Much less can we destroy the evil-doer. We should, on the contrary, suffer for him" and with him[4].

Gandhi's model of conflict resolution is a religious model of vicarious suffering, inducing repentance through it. He brings it to bear on political and other conflicts as well. Repentance means return to the full truth one had strayed from. Violence disturbs the spiritual ground of communion and communication, while self-suffering preserves and strengthens it and thus under-cuts the ground of conflict. This is how it helps to realize the vision of faith of a new humanity at peace with itself, its environment and its God.

Amaravathipudur   I. Jesudasan

2 Ibid.   3. *Collected Works*: 44, p. 82; *Navajivan*, March 16, 1930.
4 *Navajivan*, March 16, 1930, *collected works*, 43: p. 82.

The Spirituality of Psychological Conflicts

The article, authored by a psychiatrist and a theologian of spirituality, studies the psychological dynamics of conflict. Building on this and by interpreting afresh the spiritual classics (for example the theme of 'dark night'), it concludes that conflict is very much related to our growth towards the Ultimate. While positive conflicts can help this growth, the negative ones can render a person psychologically and spiritually handicapped.

Conflict is a path to reach the goal, the goal of life. This is the lesson of the Bible from the historical beginnings in the life of Abraham down to the conflicting days of the Christian community by the end of the first century AD, which serves as backdrop of the Book of Revelation. If conflict of life can be compared to a cyclone, the human mind can be said to be its 'eye'. All conflicts, irrespective of their origin or nature, finally affect the way the human mind acts and reacts. Since there is no progress in life without conflicts, it is irrealistic to seek a way out of them. Christian spirituality offers rather a way of living the conflicts through. Therefore our concern in this essay will be to see how psychological conflicts are to be seen as a way of reaching the goal; how they can help one to attain the ultimate end of life. But first we shall have to see what those conflicts are.

I

Conflicts in the Human Psyche

Our life would be simple if our basic needs are automatically satisfied. A need is an internal demand, a lack of some good, a state of tension or disequilibrium. Needs are to be satisfied in an

appropriate way if we want to enjoy success and happiness in life. Adjustments and maladjustments are due to gratification and non-gratification of needs. As individuals, we do face certain internal and environmental obstacles in satisfying our needs. These obstacles lead to three kinds of stresses in us, namely *Frustrations, Pressures* and *Conflicts*. A person experiences frustration (stress) when he is unable to attain an important goal or set of goals in a particular situation in life. Certain obstacles block his progress towards a desired goal. A person experiences pressure (stress) as the result of certain forces to achieve a particular goal, or force to behave in a particular way. Pressures may come either from outside sources or from within the individual. A person experiences conflict (stress) when stresses arise as the result of a clash between two motives, needs or goals. There are three types of conflicts we face in life.

a) Approach-avoidant conflict

Here the individual is faced with positive and negative features when he selects a particular goal in life. For example: If I decide to contract an inter-caste marriage, there are many positive features attached to that goal, and also some negative features. So I am in conflict between good and bad.

b) Approach-approach conflict

Here the individual is faced with two desirable (positive) goals. For example: An officer is offered two places of transfer on promotion. Here the individual is in conflict unable to choose one or the other.

c) Avoid-avoid conflict

Here the individual is faced with two undesirable or unattractive goals. For example: A priest is asked to choose one of the two "bad" parishes. Here the individual is caught between two bad choices.

Sources of conflicts in life

Conflicts are important sources of stress in life. And what are the sources of conflicts in our life? According to James Coleman (*Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*) some of the important and common sources of conflicts in our life are:

1) Dependency vs independency

All of us have to make a transition from protected status of childhood (dependency) to self-directed status of adulthood (independency). Some people experience conflict in this transition from dependency to independency. People who find it hard to face this transition, regress to the protected status of childhood. There are adults who are unable to direct their life, to take responsibilities, to stand on their own feet etc. These people experience conflicts.

2) Commitment vs non-involvement

In our life, when we are committed to people, justice, relationships, values etc., we do face certain risks such as getting hurt, being misunderstood, being rejected etc. At the same time it should be noted that non-involvement also leads to dissatisfaction, feelings of estrangement, alienation, lack of meaning in one's existence etc. Thus a person experiences conflicts between involvement and non-involvement.

3) Avoiding reality vs facing reality

To be out of touch with reality is sickness and immaturity. Maturity consists in facing the reality of God, others, self and the environment. Facing these realities sometimes may lead to unpleasantness, anxieties; it may be even threatening. That is why some of us run away from realities using defense mechanisms. Running away from realities lead to psychological problems.

4) Integrity vs self-advantage

Our needs are being satisified through our behaviour. Sometimes our behaviour can be in conflict with our ethical attitudes. Thus a person may experience conflicts between satisfying his needs and social approach. My need is one thing and my behaviour is another. I think and feel one way and behave in another way. I say one thing and behave otherwise. Thus a person may experience considerable conflict in the process of adhering to his own values and goals.

5) Fearfulness vs positive action

All of us experience fear in life. Maturity consists in becoming aware of one's fear, able to accept it as part of life and taking positive and appropriate action to deal with the fear, instead

of hiding or denying one's fear. Personal growth is hindered when fear is not faced with positive action. Overreacting to perceived dangers with dispropotionate feelings of fear and inadequa cy is not a healthy way of dealing with fear.

6) Sexual d esires vs restrictions

There is nothing wrong in *having* sexual and genital feelings. Having feelings is different from acting on the feelings· We should learn how to deal with them. There are certain social prohibitions concerning the expression of sex drive, which may lead to severe conflict in people. Some of the sexual conflicts may concern masturbation, premarital sexual relations, marital infidelity etc. Restricting or suppression of all sex drives may lead to certain problems. Learning to deal with these drives in an appropriate way is very important. It is to be noted here that sexual values do differ markedly among different ethnic, socio-economic and religious groups.

7) Conformity and non-conformity

All of us do belong to a particular group or groups. Every group has its own uniformity, discipline, values, goals etc. There may be tensions between the values of individuals and group. As a result, the individual experiences marked conflict when he or she is confronted by the demands, expectations or pressure of the group he or she belongs to. Blind conformity to a group pressure or expectation is against responsible self-direction. Living in accordance with one's own values, convictions, goals, beliefs, will sometimes lead to a behaviour which others may disapprove. And in a group, an individual may have to stand all alone. This creates tension and stress in the individual.

8) Value conflicts

All our choices are influenced by the values we hold. Sometimes we are not clear about our own values. When a person's value assumptions are unclear or inconsistent, he is likely to experience difficulties in making a right choice and directing his behaviour accordingly. There can be discrepancy between one's conceived values (ideal self) and operative values (real self), which may lead to conflict.

· Peter Fernando

II

Spirituality of Conflict

1. Conflict: positive and negative

While psychology as a science points to inner conflict, it is spirituality that sees its relatedness to growth towards the ultimate goal. We are able to distinguish *a positive conflict* and *a negative one*. As the words clearly suggest, positive conflict has the power in itself to help one to achieve growth in life, to put one in the way towards attainment of the goal one has set for oneself; and the negative conflict is one that causes regression in life.

For example, conflict is often seen as stress. There is a positive stress, the stress of a winner; either the necessary tension that prods one to proper action or the feeling of exhilaration that comes from a feeling of fulfilment. This is sometimes called *Eustress*. There is then a negative stress that is born out of a disappointment, a feeling of helplessness, of depression, insecurity or inadequacy. This can be termed as *Distress*[1].

Fr. A is the parish priest of a place, completely devastated by floods in mid November. In a matter of a few hours, all except a few houses of the village crumbled. Fr. A was in anguish, sorrow. But he swung into action. He alarmed the Diocesan head quarters, and the entire diocese swung into action. Fr A's stress was, therefore, a constructive one. It made him think "Why not I do something about it?" rather than resign to the "fate".

"Eustress" or positive stress is the feeling of a leader. It provides not only a good heart to look for a redemptive action but also the power "to do something about it". But "distress" results in a resignation to the situation causing listlessness, lethargy and inaction. A "eustressed" person does not want to sleep, because there is so much he can do. But a "distressed" person prefers to sleep, because there is nothing he can do.

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1   James J. Gill, "The streses of Leadership: Psychological costs that need not be paid", in *Human Development*: *Volume One*, Canbridge: Le Jacq Publishing Inc. 1981, pp. 18–19.

A classical example of distress is the case of the paralysed man in John 5. To the provocative question by Jesus, "Do you want to be healed", he has an evasive answer which betrays a distrust of self and others. The man is first and foremost psychologically paralysed; "distress" surely has that effect on its victims.

2. "The Dark Night": struggle towards integrity

One of the ways positive conflict is referred to in Christian spirituality is *darkness*. The word and concept is from St. John of the Cross, undoubtedly one of the greatest exponents of the conflict spirituality. In his work of poetry *The Dark Night*, John describes the way the disciple reaches God by means of conflicts of senses and those of the spirit[2]. By "Darkness" John means painful and conflicting experiences which are normal and inevitable in the growth towards religious maturity. They are, on the one hand, painful moments, but on the other hand, they are also moments of growth. One recognizes God's presence in a situation which looks apparently negative — a situation of conflict[3]. The experience of "darkness" is accompanied by a three-fold sign: i) breakdown of ordinary communication with God; ii) distaste for the things of God and for everything else; iii) a subtle taste for God and an unwillingness to go back to the former status, in other words, a determination to acquire a deeper status of communion with God.

The commentators often seem to refer to the deep conflicts or darkness John experienced in his own self. One cannot exclude that personalism; but complete privatization of the "dark night" will be unjust to the author. In fact, as a bona fide reformer of the carmelite order, John was put to innumerable sufferings. There were sufferings like misunderstandings and even an eight month imprisonment by his own monks.

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2 A reading of St. John's works is highly recommended. *The Collected Works* of St. John of the Cross. Bangalore: AVP Publications, 1981, pp. 295–389, offers valuable commentary and explanations too. For a resume of the spirituality of St. John of the Cross, Eulogio Pacho OCD, *The Art of Reaching God according to St. John of the Cross*, Kalamassery: Jyothir Dhara Publications. 1990.

3 Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Psychological Maturity*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989, pp. 128–167.

Secondly, in his interiority, John experienced certain dissatisfaction with the way the monks were living. The scandal of the monks' lives, in all probability, increased in John a distaste for life in the monastery. He naturally looked for a better way of life, in answer to his deep longing for union with God. Thus, the zenith of the spiritual growth of St. John of the Cross (which is referred to as the "dark night") cannot be separated from his efforts to reform his order. His conflicts therefore have a double aspect: the difficulties he experienced in leading his order to reformation, which at the same time meant deep conflicts in his own interior life. It is pertinent to observe that "his mystical experience gets matured during the months of captivity" in the prison cell of Toledo[4].

Coming to the experience of Jesus, one can point out to many a moment of conflict similar to "the dark night". Jesus' disappointment with his own people (voiced out in the lamentation over Jerusalem), the lack of understanding on the part of his own relatives, the imbecility of the disciples, the hard heartedness of the pharisees, the moments of crisis in the Gethsemane and finally the moment of death on the cross are all moments of the dark night. These moments are for Jesus indepth experiences of the Abba, moments of faith and hope. Out of each such conflicting situation, Jesus emerges as more and more a free person; his vision becomes clearer and his commitment grows more intense and he becomes more and more rooted and grounded in love[5].

3. Desolation: symptom of disintegration

If we understand positive conflict as "dark night", we should nevertheless distinguish it from "desolation" in Ignatian spirituality and depression in modern psychology. The Ignatian desolation is to be understood in contrast to "consolation", which is an experience of interior joy and peace as a result of the realization of God's closeness. Desolation is just the opposite of this. It is "darkness of soul, turmoil of the spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of

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4   Eulogio Pache, *Op. Cit.*, p. 4.
5   See Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985, pp. 117–126.

love..."[6]   Desolation is the result of cleavage between God and the human person. But the "dark night" in John of the Cross, as we have seen, is a form of God experience, where even when there is an apparent absence of God, there is deep longing for God and presence of an interior peace. But Ignatian desolation is the result of spiritual sloth, lack of authenticity in life[7].

The Ignatian desolation is similar to "depression" in modern psychology. Depressed persons are unhappy and dejected. They suffer from loss of appetite and sleeplessness. They feel worthless and guilty and think of death and sometimes even of suicide. Existential psychology holds that "depression is caused by a failure to life authentically. It is a failure to make choices according to one's own values, a failure to be self-directed"[8].

Such a conflict is surely a sign of a deep spiritual malaise, a symptom of disintegration, caused by a gap between belief and practice, conviction and conduct, value-setting and value-living. This calls for a total reorientation in frank self-confrontation and forthright honesty[9].

4. Discernment: an ongoing process

One of the most valuable contributions of christian spirituality to human mental health is discernment. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:10), "whose object is to identify the presence or absence of God in given human activity"[10]. It means sorting out motives in one's spiritual life. It means differentiating between good and evil, prescinding from mere appearances. In the area of psychological conflict, discernment is necessary to diagnose whether the conflict in question is positive or negative, whether it is the dark night or desolation (depression).

6   Exercises No. 317. Translation by Louis J. Puhl SJ, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, St. Paul Publications, 1965, p. 119.

7   Cf. *Exercises*, No. 318. Cf. Michael J. Buchley, "The Structure of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits", in *The Way Supplement*, 20 (1973), pp. 26-31.

8   Joann Wolski Conn, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 143-145.

9   The case of Morton T. Kelsey, *Christo-Psychology*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, pp. 2-3, is an example of conflict in terms of depression.

10 Ernest E. Larkin, in "Discernment of Spirits" in (Ed.) Gordon S. Wakefield, *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, London: SCM Press, 1983, p. 115.

Another reason for the need of serious discernment is the fact of hidden motives for our actions. "Hidden" means that these motives are usually not conscious ones. Transactional Analysis points out to what are called "Drivers". They are motives which seem apparently good, but in the final analysis cause depression and withdrawal in the persons concerned.

5.   Fixing the "why"

The purpose of discernment of motives is to sharpen one's goal-vision. Viktor Frankl, the exponent of "logotherapy" has underlined not only the need of having a goal in life, but also the therapeutic nature of such goal-setting. Goal-setting is meaning finding; or "will to meaning". The basic claim of Viktor Frankl is that absence of a meaning in life causes what he calls "the existential vacuum". Frankl often quotes Nietzsche's provocative and meaningful saying: "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*". I have personally found that Frankl's insistence on personally *finding a motive for life and activity through personal responsibility, love commitment and involvement* is a way out of many a conflicting situation[11].

Though theoretically it is certain to me that a life without conflicts is impossible, in practice conflicts often look meaningless. Take for instance, the personal life conflicts that come from the church-imposed law of celibacy. To spend sometime away from the hustle of daily activity in order to sharpen inner motivation does not by itself take away conflicts, but surely provides a reason why I should learn to live with those conflicts. Consider, for instance, the suffering people undergo to bring up their families. They know the "why", therefore, they put up with any "how"[12].

6.   Christ-meaning

Bernard J. Tyrrell's *Christotherapy* is a theory of psychological healing which means to bring faith in Christ into the sphere of psychotherapy, stressing "on Christ's role as healer

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11   Strongly recommended the reading of Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for meaning*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962.

12   For the relationship between logotherapy and message of Christ's life, see Robert C Leslie, *Jesus and Logotherapy*, Nashvill: Abington Press, 1965.

through the meaning and value he incarnates"[13]. Tyrrel emphasises the need of enlightenment that is very close to Gnana Marga in Indian tradition.

Conflict is rendered meaningful if the person finds a meaning, if he finds the "Why". For a christian this meaning is closely connected with the meaning Christ himself had for his own life and its conflicts. In christian spirituality one of the fundamental questions asked is: What did Christ want to achieve. To that question the answer is the Kingdom of God or the Reign of God which means a new and lasting society of love, dignity and equality (with God as parent and all people as brothers and sisters)[14].

The next question a christian asks is about himself. Why should I live? Why should I suffer? Why should I go through these conflicts? If I am so "enlightened" as to give the answer: "It is for the Kingdom", then my life and the life of Jesus meet. Our motives become one. This is the root of christotherapy. Jesus and I have the same vision and share the same mission. It gives me power to live with conflicts.

7. A new life through a new vision

One of the writers who has so beautifully blended psychological growth with spiritual integrity is John Powell. In his down-to-earth books, the priest-psychologist, proposes a new life through a new vision. The basic assumption of the theory of vision therapy is: what affects our feelings — positive or negative feelings – is not the reality itself, but the way we perceive it, the way we see it. There are good and bad aspects to everything, to every human situation, to every human institution, to every human person. We often prefer to fix our look on the negative aspects that affect our feelings and our attitudes and finally our own acts. "What you see is what you get." Misconceptions or distortions in one's basic vision is at the root of most of the social incompatibilities or conflicts of social adjustment[15].

13 Bernard J. Tyrell, *Christotherapy: Healing through Enlightenment*, Bangalore : St. Paul Publications, p. 19.

14 Albert Nolan, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 43–82.

15 John Powell, *Fully Human Fully Alive: A New Life through a New Vision*, Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1976.

The basis of the positive vision is God's own vision of myself, others and the world. God accepts me as I am. His unconditional love makes me feel: "It is good to be me; it is enough to be me". The same attitude heals the rupture in inter-personal relationship: "It is good that you are you"[16].

8. Prayer in conflict

Prayer is one of the most universal, ancient and common ways of communing with God, alone or in a group or community, against the background of daily lives. Most great people have had recourse to prayer in times of conflicts, not only to be released from negative and harmful conflicts, but also to seek power to fight it out in case of *Dharma Yuddha*. Jesus is the best example to what we could do with prayer. Whenever he was in conflict, he approached the Father in prayer. It is not necessary here to enumerate those instances in which he withdraws from the crowds and goes to a lonely place to spend time with himself and the Father. What prayer could do to him, it could do to the person of today, caught up in varied conflicts in personal and social lives.

Many Christian spiritual masters have pointed to the effect of prayer in times of conflict. We can only indicate a few of their directives. St. Paul speaks of prayer as an action of the Holy Spirit, "who intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). *Sigh* is an outward expression of the inward longing. Prayer is here seen as a communication of in-depth feelings. Well, that is the first effect of it. In the context of a conflict, the action of prayer offers an opportunity to communi-cate the strain to "the other", to God who is within oneself. This is what we find Jesus doing in Gethsemane when he "began to be sorrowful and troubled" (Mtt. 26:37). He communicates not only the "distress and trouble" (Mk. 14:33) but also his longing for liberation. The same kind of prayer (as communication) con-tinues until the moment of death.

What happens in communication ? From experience we know that when conflicts are communicated at prayer, we experience peace of heart, a peace that does not make us forget

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16   John Powell, *Unconditional Love* (same publisher), 1978 and *The Christian Vision*, 1984.

the reality, but one that strengthens us to face whatever may be in the offing. Luke's Gospel which is called also the Gospel of prayer, underlines these two effects of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane: *peace* and *strength*. St. Theresa of Avila, was well aware of this from her own experience and recommended "quiet prayer" to others[17]. In fact Jesus did say: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mtt. 11:28). The word *rest* comes from the Greek word *anapasis*, which is a term used in the agricultural parlance, when the land is given "rest" in between crops so that it may bear good harvest when it is cultivated again. Yes, prayer is such a rest. It is rejuvenation and restrengthening. Prayer is therefore indispensable for people of action, especially for those who spend their energies in the struggle for social justice.

Another effect of prayer in conflict is *discernment*: "Father, if it is your will, ", "to be able to discern" what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:12). Sometimes the way is not clear; we should sharply distinguish right and wrong. Personal and even community prayer is surely a process of discernment. Our hidden motives, our self-orientations, are so subtle that in the thick of our activities we hardly notice the sneaking self. In a special way, in the arena of social involvement and social work, where we often "do things for others", it is necessary to be on our guard against using people for our fulfilment and satisfaction, Feeling of fear, inferiority, guilt, hatred etc. should be in prayer distinguished from true desire for the Kingdom[18]. Thomas Merton has severely warned against the social reformer who does not pray: "He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centred ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas"[19].

<div align="right">John Kulandai</div>

17 Paul DeBlassie III, *Inner Calm: A Christian Answer to Modern Stress*, Ligouri, Missouri: Ligouri Publications, 1985, pp 28–29.

18 William R. Parker and Elaine St. John, *Prayer Can Change Your Life: Experiments and Techniques in Prayer Therapy*, New York: Pocket Books, 1974, pp 70–88.

19 Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971, p. 164,

Conflict and Growth in
Family Life

The author surveys the changing scenario of Indian family life,
due to various socio-cultural factors. Acknowledging the inevit-
able fact of conflicts in family life, he analyses the various
ways of coping with them, and underlines the spiritual
experience of conflict resolution.

Most schools of spirituality, christian as well as non-
christian, have in the past tended to identify growth in holiness with
the attainment of inner peace, harmony and integration. Struggles
and conflicts, intrapersonal, interpersonal or social, were generally
interpreted as the mark of one who was still very much on the
way, plodding only in the preliminary stages of spiritual ascent.
On the contrary, the one who has scaled the peaks of sanctity
was seen as resting in peace up above and untouched by the
turbulence and turmoils of everyday life and history. He was
conflict-free and calm both interiorly and exteriorly.

Such a spiritual ideal might have appeared possible and
desirable in the traditional society characterized by immobility
and permanence. But society today is typified by convulsive social
change as well as progress which is rapid and often disorderly
induced by modern technology, massive industrialization and mass
media. In such a scenario the spiritual goals of harmony and
static peace, however much they might be desired, seem for all
practical purposes unattainable and utopian.

Besides, with the spread of historical consciousness, we
have become more aware of life and history as a continuous
process. History means change and to be in history is to be per-
manently a pilgrim. In this historical condition progress always
implies struggles and conflict. It is never a fully finished condition
or a permanently attained stasis. Rather, any progress is only

provisional and we are called upon to continuously deal with ever higher levels of conflict leading towards loftier reaches or wholeness.

One of the areas in which this phenomenon has become strikingly noticeable is family life. The recent changes in our society, culture and consciousness have exercised enormous impact on couple relationship and family structure. In this essay we shall briefly analyse the recent changes that have come about in the family and go on to see how despite the tragic potential for causing conflict in and the dissolution of family relationships they can also become, if rightly dealt with, a rich source of human growth and holiness.

From patriarchy to partnership

The recent changes in the family structure and style of relating can be summarily described as a move from patriarchy to partnership or, in other words, from male domination to mutuality[1].

The traditional family was father-dominated. The male was considered superior. Apart from possessing greater muscular strength the male was also respected as the real transmitter of life. In the absence of scientific knowledge about the process of human procreation the semen was regarded as incipient life and the womb as the mere field in which life grows. Being thus considered stronger and superior it was the father of the family who was the leader and made all the important decisions. The wife had only a subservient role. The patriarchal family had a hierarchical order with the husband at the top with most rights and privileges, followed by the wife, the male and the female children.

Such a family set up had its own advantages. Of these the most important one was that the roles were differentiated and imposed as biologically preordained. The rules were also culturally predefined and the rights and responsibilities of each were clearly separated and delimited. Thus any possible clash or competition was, for the most part, excluded by the very structure itself of the family. Even if conflicts were to arise it was clear to all that the

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1   See David Mace, *Close Companions: The Marriage Enrichment Handbook*, New York: Continuum, 1982, pp. 9ff.

husband had the final say and the others had to obey. This ensured to a large extent the stability of the family.

Whatever be the advantages of the traditional patriarchal family the fact is that it has collapsed in most countries of the West and is starting to collapse even in the culturally conservative countries like India. There is emerging a new kind of family in which the couple relationship is based on companionship. The traditional hierarchical set up of the family is giving way to one based on intimacy, mutuality and equal partnership. The rigid rules of the patriarchal family have become more flexible and the roles which were earlier considered as predetermined are now freely chosen and at times even interchanged. In the new companionship marriage the separate spheres of activity and responsibility of the husband and wife have become very much merged and common. Leadership is shared and decision making is participatory. The marital partners are co-responsible equals in all areas of family life.

This new structure and style of couple relationship, however rapidly it might be spreading, has certainly not proved to be an unmixed blessing. It's possibilities of failure have frightening consequences as it has been borne out by facts. Not only family conflicts have increased but also there is a steady rise in the incidences of wife beating, child abuse, youth delinquency, alcoholism, broken homes and above all divorce. This tragic development which is thought to be consequent to a considerable extent upon the spread of the new style family may be read by some as an early sympton of the eventual disintegraticn and demise of family as a social institution unless, of course, the traditional family is reestablished.

However, a discerning observer would certainly see that the disappearance of the traditional family is an irreversible trend and it need not be equated with the disintegration of all family life. The new family is definitely in and it is not a mere passing fashion. It is a significant cultural change and a great opportunity. Instead of being all evil, it has enormous possibilities to lead men and women to a greater interpersonal growth and to a happier and a more fulfilling family life. Evidently to make a success of this new partnership marriage greater interpersonal relational

skills need to be developed and particularly more mature ways of creatively coping with conflicts.

Coping with conflicts

Conflict arises when there is a clash of wishes. The husband and wife are two different persons. Even though by sex they are complementary and marriage establishes a great area of commonality between them they are still two unique individuals each with his or her own different backgrounds, perceptions, values and wants. Differences between strangers may not matter much. But when persons have to interact daily, as do husband and wife, their differences may turn into disagreements, arguments and quarrels. The closer two individuals come to each other and the greater their involvement the potential for conflict between them also proportionately increases. Thus a conflict is a disturbing difference between two or more persons who interact or are commonly involved. Some such areas in which the husband and wife are commonly involved are sex, division of household responsibilities, financial management, relationship with in-laws and others and child rearing. These areas become conflict-generative some time or other in most families. Differences in the social, economic, educational, religious and cultural backgrounds as well as the value orientations and ideological commitments of the marital partners do also cause or aggravate conflicts between them.

There are four main ways in which families deal with such conflicts: excluding, exploding, avoiding and resolving. Excluding is the way of the traditional family. The other three are mostly found in the new partnership marriages[2].

Excluding

The traditional family's way of coping with conflict was to minimize its possible emergence. The disruptive power of conflict was very well recognized and family relationships were so structured as to curb its occurence as much as possible. This was achieved by the hierarchical ordering of the family in which

2 See E. G. Nelson, *Keeping Love Alive*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1978, pp. 64ff; David Mace, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 85ff.

the husband was the deciding authority and the wife submissive, by separating their spheres of activities and by the rigid enforcement of rules. Not that the roles and rules were never infringed and that there was no anger in traditional families. But even the ways husband and wife were to deal with anger was differently conditioned by cultural expectations. Husband could get angry as long as his anger did not become violent. Even some violence on his part was often condoned if it was not extreme. But a good wife was not supposed to get angry.

Such exclusion of conflicts, of course, brought about surface calm in the family and secured to a large extent its stability. But all was not well in the traditional family as it appeared on the outside. The price paid for the exclusion of conflicts and the safeguarding of family stability was indeed quite heavy. It was the very depersonalization of the wife and decay in the couple's mutual understanding and intimacy. Unchallenged and not confronted by the woman the man remained authoritarian and thus underdeveloped.

Exploding

With the growing awareness regarding marriage as a partnership of equals the wives are less submissive and have become more assertive. If the husband has not adjusted himself to this and shed his patriarchal outlook and behaviour the scene is set for explosive conflicts in families. Anger is expressed without restraint and unmindful of the other person's feelings and such quarrels tend to be marked by raw fury and aggressive hostility. Being impulsive these fights easily turn into slugfests resulting only in increased anger and deeper hurt feelings. Though the love of some couples may be so resilient as to effect reconciliation even after such quarrels generally they are only destructive. Couples having this pattern of impulsive fighting mostly "find that intimacy fades, love becomes more fragmented, and their marriages continue to erode"[3].

Avoiding

Most families today consider conflict as incompatible with genuine marital love and tend to avoid them. In the background

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3   E. G. Nelson *Op. Cit.,* p. 71

of the growing expectation of romantic love as the core of marriage relationship when conflicts invariably occur the marital partners feel very disappointed and guilty. Lacking in appropriate skills to deal with them constructively they slowly drift apart emotionally. Interaction in areas which have potential for triggering fights gets slowly reduced. Intense feelings which cause quarrels are repressed. This inevitably leads to the loss of intimacy and renders their relationship superficial. As David Mace explains, "Couples who have habitually repressed their anger become incapable of tenderness. The inner core of love between them withers away; and although they may go through the motions of being affectionate it is not genuine"[4]. As a result, disillusionment and frustration set in and one or the other of the partners may turn elsewhere for a more satisfying relationship leading to further quarrels and divorce or take to alcohol and other addictive behaviours.

Resolving

Resolving is the way mature families deal with conflicts. They are not frightened of conflicts and do not seek to run away from them at all costs or pretend that they have no problems. They see occasional conflicts as normal and inevitable in any close relationship. Though they recognize the destructive potential of quarrels they also know that if rightly handled they can even become beneficial.

Anger or other negative feelings are neither repressed nor allowed to explode without restraint. They are recognized, accepted and the other is told about how one feels without letting it become abusive outburst. Differing perceptions, preoccupations or expectations that lie at the root of the conflict are openly talked about, understood, valued, and the necessary adjustments are made. One's own thoughtlessness, insensitivity or selfishness is acknowledged and forgiveness asked for and given. Thus a mature couple fight fair and every conflict is for them an opportunity to grow in mutual understanding, acceptance and intimacy. "Each conflict resolved marks another milestone in their progress toward relationship-in-depth"[5].

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4   David Mace, *Op. Cit.*, p. 95.
5   *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Conflict resolution, of course, is never a fully finished affair. Conflicts continue to arise even in the best of families and in the most intimate times for, as David Mace describes, the marital relationship is a recurring rhythm of "love-anger cycle"[6]. The resolution of low level conflicts becomes always a call to tackle higher level conflicts. In this process couple realize communion and harmony only at the very depth and centre of conflicts.

Conflict resolution as a spiritual experience

Resolving marital conflicts leads to a deeper interpersonal communion and a deeper spirituality. This can be seen as happening in three most significant ways.

First any conflict resolution requires the recognition of the other as other, as different from oneself with his or her uniqueness that is never reducible to one's own. Conflict often brings to light some hitherto unrecognized aspect of the others – his or her subtle feelings, desires or needs, values etc. This otherness of the marital partner when recognised and respected, as one does in conflict resolution, increasingly opens out to the experience of the ultimate other. Martin Buber has articulated such an interpersonal spirituality which becomes realizable in an unparalleled manner in the encounter of the marital partner[7]. As Samuel Rayan has recently pointed out, "Otherness is perhaps the finest representation we have of divine transcendence. The basic experience of transcendence is the respect we have for the other and for what the other holds most dear"[8]. In explicitly christian terms the other in marriage partnership is the sacrament of the other who is manifest in Jesus Christ (see Ephe 5:25-32) and thus a gift and a grace.

Secondly the resolving of marital conflict calls for compromise. One or the other of the partners or both may be required to give up his or her view or way, plan or pleasure. A certain limitation of the other may have to be accepted or one may be called upon to change oneself. This interpersonal adjustment or sacrifice is an expression of marital love in its sublime form. The resolution of conflicts thus becomes an occasion for the couple to actualize ever more their capacity to love. This opening up of new springs of love in their hearts naturally leads them to ever greater

6   *Ibid.*, p. 84.

7   See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1959 (2nd edn.), pp. 75ff. "He who loves a woman, and brings her life to present realization in his, is able to look in the *Thou* of her eyes into a beam of the eternal *Thou*". – *ibid.*, p. 106.

8   Samuel Rayan, "The Other and the Theologian" in S. Arockiasamy (ed.) *Responding to Communalism: The Task of Religions and Theology*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991, 107–137, p. 127.

intimacy through which they have a foretaste of the Divine which is all love As Felix Adler remarks. "The love which they found in themselves and still find there to the last, becomes to them the pledge of a vaster love that moves beyond the stars and the sun."[9]

The third component that invariably finds place in any mature resolution of marital conflicts is giving and receiving forgiveness. Often conflict arises when one of the partners feels deeply hurt. Besides even in a carefully handled conflict an overflow of anger may easily take place. As a result hurtful words might be exchanged and piled up grievances hurled at each other. All this might leave both the partners not only feeling pained but also guilty. Thus the resolution of a marital conflict is rarely complete until forgiveness is asked for and given. This act of mutual forgiveness becomes for them an experience of the unconditional forgiveness of God. It is in such acts of forgiving that they become more and more human and God-like sharing in the very being of the "God of forgiveness" (Ne 9:17).

Conclusion

Erik Erikson has shown how at every stage of personal development growth is attained only through conflict[19]. The same can also be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the various stages of the family life cycle[11]. However, in most so called good families there is a taboo against quarrels. Religious instructions have only reinforced this taboo. Nothing has done more harm to marriages than this false belief. The fact is the couples who try to avoid conflicts at all costs are those who end up having very superficial and unsatisfactory relationship or sudden explosive conflicts endangering their very marriages. Instead when day to day marital conflicts are accepted as normal and constructively handled couple relationship becomes enriched, their intimacy grows deeper and family life truely becomes an exciting adventure into the ever greater mysteries of the human as well as the Divine. For through their creative struggles with each other the marital partners are wrestling, as Jacob did, with the God of life himself and getting his blessing (see Gen 32:24-29).

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9   Felix Adler as cited in David Mace, *Op. Cit.*, p. 117.

10 See Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980, pp. 51ff.

11 See Jack Dominian, *Make or Break: An Introduction to Marriage Counselling*, London: SPCK, 1984, pp. 91ff.

Conflict Spirituality in O. T. :
Prophets as Paradigms

The author studies a few examples of conflicts in the ministry
of the O. T. prophets, against the background of their times.
He also examines the inner conflict experienced by the
prophets. He concludes showing how the God-experience of the
prophets in their commitment to the other was deepened in
and through conflictual situations.

Introduction

Conflict is certainly more universally experienced by humans
than peace and harmony. In the encounter of deeply and genuinely
committed individuals and groups in the society, conflict is to be
expected. On the contrary, absence of any type of conflict would
amount to the lifelessness of a ¨cemetery or to an absolute but
impossible dictatorship. Hence commitment is at least the proximate
cause of conflict.

But commitment in itself is a positive and praiseworthy
value. How, then, is it the cause of conflict? In fact, the ultimate
source and cause of conflict has to be ¨sought somewhere else.
To whom or to what cause one is committed – that is the source
of conflict.

Spirituality may be defined or at least descriptively articulated
as a constant and persevering growth in one's commitment to the
Spirit through the commitment to the spirit. In other words,
through commitment to a noble cause (the spirit) one grows
constantly and perseveringly in the commitment to God (the
Spirit). The former is, so to say, the sacramental sign of the latter.
It is against this background that the conflict spirituality should
be viewed, studied, evaluated and lived.

Conflicts: historical human experiences

Every history, be it the history of a nation or of a religion,
etc..., is shaped in the midst of conflicts and struggles. Even
more, every human individual has been moulded and has grown

to what he is at present, mainly, if not solely, because of the conflicts which he had to face and live through. At the same time, no one will deny that this individual, while living through the conflicts, have matured in his spirituality (i. e., in the commitment to the cause for which he worked), and in his relation to the Absolute. Thus his growth in spirituality is due to his historical and very human experiences of conflicts. Conflicts are more advantageous human experiences than absence of conflicts for a man to grow in God- consciousness. They are giant strides towards union with God.

If conflicts are human experiences undergone in history, the following are necessary consequences:

1. No two experiences of conflicts can be identical. They may be similar, but not exactly the same.

2. Even for the same person, conflicts are unrepeatable, in so far as they are experiences in irretrievable history.

3. Nevertheless there is an inner unity and continuity, in spite of the multiplicity. succession and therefore discontinuity of these experiences. This implies necessarily a movement, a growth for better or for worse.

A person may face conflicts because of his social location. The social function of someone may bring him into conflicts. The institutional fabric of a given society is very often a cause for conflicts. Finally among free human persons, conflicts are but natural. Moreover, life's ambiguities cause conflicts even within a person[1].

We shall see very briefly how from the history of the Old Testament religion - more precisely from the history of the prophets we can formulate a kind of conflict spirituality.

Prophets: paradigms for conflict spirituality

In the history of Israel, the unique phenomenon of prophecy

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1   Robert R. Wilson has applied the anthropological and social data to the prophetic phenomena in Israel and elucidated the fact of conflicts: "Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel", *The Bible and Liberation*, (ed) Norman K. Gottwald (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N. Y. 1983), pp. 201–234; Idem., *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984). The same problem has been studied from another aspect by James L. Crenshaw, "The Human Dilemma and Literature of Dissent", *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament*, (ed) Douglas A. Knight (SPCK London, 1977), pp. 235–258.

stands out as a typical example of conflict spirituality[2]. The prophets may be considered as paradigms for this spirituality. For, if there was one phenomenon in Israelite religion and history, which came into conflict with different sectors and powers in the society, and which still claimed to be a genuinely spiritual force anchored in the ineffable God-experience, it was the prophetic movement.

Besides being the charismatically endowed recipients of visions and preachers of God's word that awaited the faith of the hearers, the prophets were independent thinkers, who in a process of "subsequent insight", gave a rational form to what they had already become certain of intuitively, and who demanded similar reflection from their listeners[3]. Moreover, the prophets were the proponents of divine *pathos*, and gave expression to their participation in divine suffering. They surrendered to the power of the word and became instruments of the spirit[4].

There are two ways in which we can study the prophets inasmuch as they are models of conflict spirituality: Either to take any one of the prophets (e.g. Jeremiah) and study how he grew in spirituality amidst all the conflicts he had to face; or, to consider different prophets, with one example each of conflicts and study how they grew up in union with God. Without any special reason, just as a matter of course, the second way has been chosen in the following study.

Moses in conflict with oppressive political power

The massive structure of the Egyptian Pyramid is a symbolic representation of the oppressive and exploitative political power structure of Pharaoh. He was considered as god, and all things and all humans in Egypt had meaning only in so far as they were of use to the king[5].

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2   The uniqueness of Old Testament prophecy has been convincingly shown by Vawter, Bruce, C. M., *The Conscience of Israel* (Sheed and Ward, London and New York, 1961), esp. p. 181; Von Rad, G., *The Message of the Prophets* (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1969), Trans. D.M.G. Stalker; Koch, Klaus. *The Prophets* (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1982) Trans. Margaret Kohl, Vol.I esp. pp. 1–22.

3   Koch, K., Op. cit. cf. p. vii.   4   Crenshaw, James L., Art. cit. cf. p. 237

5 . For a thorough treatment of the socio–political background of Exodus period, see the elaborate study of Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250–1050 B. C. E .

The way in which the Pharaoh treated the Israelites is a classic example of oppressive political power: He used an alleged threat as an occasion for his own wickedness. The reason he gave for crushing the Hebrews was founded on a series of hypothetical situations (Ex 1:8-14). The oppressive measures were minutely calculated and cleverly mobilized: Forced birth control or better, obligatory male-infanticide was imposed on the Hebrews (Ex. 1:15ff); the Hebrews were reduced to the condition of bonded labourers, and subsequently compelled to work to promote the "new economic policy of maximum production" even without the supply of essential raw materials (Ex. 5:7-21).

It is with this great pharaonic power that Moses the prophet came into conflict. We see that Moses grew in spirituality in the process of fulfilling his commitment or mission in the midst of a series of conflicts: Moses gave vent to his human furore at the sight of human misery caused by unjust oppression and exploitation, and his attempt to break that situation resulted in a murder (Ex. 2:11-15a). Failure and alienation resulting from this attempt brought him to Midian. There Moses the "discoverer of God" in the local etiology became the "discovered by God" in his call[6]. It is the encounter with and the commission from the Lord of history that transformed Moses from a human fighter for justice into a divinely sent liberator. God's self-disclosure was intimately linked with Moses' call for commitment to human freedom and human dignity. Thus the God-experience of Moses became for him the ever fresh source of energy.

The ministry of Moses consisted in nurturing, nourishing and evoking a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture. It was a ministry meant to criticize and dismantle the dominant consciousness and culture of the present, and to energize persons and communities to move towards a new counter-culture different from that of the past[7]. Moses' prophetic ministry in fact

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(SCM Press Ltd, London, 1979). For a commentary on Exodus from the view-point of Liberation Theology, see George V. Pixley, *On Exodus*: A Liberation Perspective. Trans. Robert R. Barr (Orbis Books. Maryknoll, N. Y. 1987). Childs, Brevard S., *Exodus* (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1977) is a very good theological commentary on the Book of Exodus.

6 Childs, Brevard S., Op. cit. cf. p. 72

7 Brueggemann, Walter., *The Prophetic Imagination*, (Fortress Press,

dismantled the politics of oppression and exploitation by countering it with a politics of justice and compassion. The Egyptian religion of static triumphalism was neatly displaced by the Mosaic-Israelite religion of God's freedom. As a result, the cry of lament burst into the poetry of doxology at the victory of the free and freeing God (Ex. 15)[8].

Moses' conviction was two dimensional: on the one hand, his conviction was anchored in his commitment to liberate the enslaved Israelites; on the other hand, his God-experience, which was, for him, a peak experience, gave him the conviction that God was *with him* (Ex. 3:12) and *for Israel* (Ex. 3:7-10). The unbroken and unbreakable thread of spirituality that passed through all the conflicts throughout Moses' struggles initially with the Pharaoh, later with other gentile nations and even with his own kinsmen, knit his two dimensional conviction together and made him grow in faith and hope. In his case, faith was sharing the people's suffering and hope was the eschatological orientation, i. e., an effective vision for the imminent future. In every tension-charged situation of conflicts, he started ruminating on his commitment to the people, sought the guidance and revelation from God (e. g. Ex. 5:22 and passim) and eventually obeyed the will of God. Moses' commitment to the people was the immediate test and touchstone for his commitment to Yahweh.

Elijah in conflict with absolute kingship and aggressive baalism

Elijah has many similarities of character with Moses. He is, at least in the literary presentation of the Deuteronomic historian, a literary parallel of Moses.

Moses was in conflict with a non-Israelite absolute kingship, while Elijah came into conflict with an Israelite king, Ahab who assumed an absolute power over his subjects. From religious aspect, Moses was in struggle with the Egyptian gods, in order to dispossess them of their already imposed domination on the Israelite settlers, whereas Elijah was fighting with the aggressive Baalism which was cunningly and steadily thrust on the Israelites

Philadelphia, 1985), cf. pp. 11-27

8 Freedman, David Noel., "Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry", *JBL* 96/1 (1977), 5-26. The author shows that poetry in the Bible is one of the chief means of revelation.

by Jezebel, against Yahwism, the religion of the God already in possession.

Elijah's conflict was on two fronts: against Baalism on the religious ground and against royal absolutism and exploitation on the social level. The notice of the redactor in 1 Kg.18:4 makes it clear that because of the determined persecution of queen Jezebel, Elijah's would-be prophetic supporters hid themselves in caves and he himself was reduced to operate as a peripheral prophet. The prophets of Baal were slowly trying to become the central prophets, naturally with the strong political support of Jezebel. The Israelite Ahab was not coming out openly to oppose this effort of his queen. The common people, of course, were undecided as to the side they should take. In terms of warfare, Baalism was making inroads into and aggression on Yahwism. The prophet's incomparable effectiveness, his total involvement in, and uncompromising zeal for Yahwism, his ruthless temperament and consequent religious intolerance thrust him into a situation of conflict with Jezebel and her prophets of Baal. He took up the challenge and entered into combat with them (1 Kg.18: 20-40). He had to defend Yahweh against Baal, to prove that Yahweh was the real rightful God and to establish that he was the true prophet. Here was the case of a peripheral prophet challenging the central ones. The ordeal on Mount Carmel ended in favour of Elijah, and the terms of the duel-fashioned challenge were executed (1 Kg. 18:40). Yahweh's cause had been championed by his prophet and all the people fell on their faces and confessed with the liturgical acclamation: "Yahweh, he is God; Yahweh, he is God" (1 Kg. 18:39), which echoed the very name of the prophet (Elijah = Yahweh is my God or My God is Yahweh)[9].

The second conflict which Elijah had with Ahab on social grounds is presented in the story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kg. 21). This episode makes an interesting symbolic parallel to the ordeal on Mt. Carmel. The parallelism may be shown as follows:

9 See Simon J. De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1978), pp. 114–116; for critical comments about "the Elijah Cycle"; De Vaux, Roland., "The Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel", *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Trans. Damian McHugh (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1972), pp. 238-251; The Baal who was invoked on Mount Carmel was the Baal of Tyre called more properly Melkart; John Gray, *I & II Kings* (SCM Press Ltd,

Ordeal on Carmel (1 Kg. 18)	Story of Naboth's vineyard (1Kg. 21)
Religious unjust aggression	Social unjust aggression
The possessor: Yahweh	The possessor: Naboth
The aggressor: Baal	The aggressor: Ahab
The engineer of the aggression: Jezebel	The engineer of the aggression: Jezebel
The agents of aggression: the Prophets of Baal	The agents of aggression: the elders + nobles of Naboth's city
The champion of Yahweh's cause: Elijah	The champion of Naboth's cause: Elijah
Judgment: Yahweh is declared the true God	Judgment: Punishment to Jezebel (21:23; 2 Kg. 9:36) and to Ahab in his son Joram (see 1 Kg. 21:19 = 22:37-38 + 2 Kg. 9:22-26)

We see that the conflicts of Elijah centred on two main rights: the right of God and the right of the individual Israelites. The violation of the individual's right is equal to the violation of God's right. In the mind of Elijah, the misappropriation of Naboth's vineyard by Ahab was diametrically opposed to the "gift of the land", which was one of the covenantal promises of God to the Patriarchs and their descendants, and hence Ahab's action of unjust aggression in view of acquisition amounted to unjust aggression on Yahweh's belongings!

Elijah's spirituality is also two dimensional: commitment to God's cause and commitment to an individual who belonged to the covenanted people of God. He was a disturber against the religious aggression of Baal and against the oppressive royal structure[10]. His uncompromising zeal for these two causes brought Elijah into conflict with the king and queen. But he did not go back from his commitment. He had to suffer because of his zeal (1 Kg. 19:10).

Amos in conflict with exploitative cultic power

Amos of Tekoa was a peripheral prophet on two counts: i) socially – because during his ministry in Israel, he did not have a supporting group and economically he was not from the capitalist class, since he was a "herdsman and a dresser of sycamore

London, 1980), cf pp. 383–414 and 433–444

10 The Hebrew for "disturber" in 1 Kg. 18:17 is *oker* from ·*kr* = to stir up, disturb, trouble; cf. 1 Sam. 14:29; Jos. 6:18; 7:25; Jud. 11:35; 1 Chr. 2:7

trees" (Am. 7:14); ii) and even territorially – because he was a man outside of Israel – a man from Judah. His thunderous proclamation of Yahweh's judgment on gentile nations (1:2–2:3) and on Israel 2:6–16), brought him into conflict with others. Only one example of such conflicts has been handed down in narrative form. It has come down in the literary form of conflict narrative with one oracle of judgment on an individual couched in the account, i. e., Am. 7:10–17. The conflict was between Amos the prophet of Yahweh and Amaziah the priest of the sanctuary at Bethel[11].

Amaziah belonged to the priestly clan ordained and patronized by Jeroboam I, who founded the shrines of Bethel and Dan when the Empire of Solomon was split (1 Kg. 12:26-33). It was but natural that the priestly group at Bethel was loyal to the dynasty of Jeroboam. Religion came under the power of the king and the priests functioned not only as ministers of cult but also as reporters to the king. Thus Amaziah sent a report to Jeroboam II. Amaziah accused Amos that Amos conspired against the king (7:10)[12].

What are the ultimate motives of Amaziah in confronting Amos the prophet? Apparently Amaziah is concerned with the decency and order of cult at Bethel (something like "the law and order" pretext of our rulers). His counsel (7:12) suggests this motive: Amaziah tells Amos to leave the territory of Israel, go to the land of Judah and prophesy there. Deep down under this concern for "law and order" for Bethel, there is the loyalist's zeal for the royal family. Amaziah's words are very significant: Bethel is "the sanctuary of *the king*" and "the temple of *the kingdom*" (and not of Yahweh) and therefore *you* (the prophet of Yahweh) have no right to prophesy at Bethel. There may be one more reason for Amaziah to order Amos to leave for Judah. Most probably Amos' critique of and judgment on the sanctuary of Bethel (5:5, 21-23, 27) prevented or at least reduced the revenue of the shrine!

11 Amos 7:10-17 has a literary parallel in Jer. 20:1–6 where Jeremiah the prophet comes into conflict with Pashhur the priest of Jerusalem Temple.
12 The Heb. *qsr* connotes conspiratorial incitement to insurrection; cf. 1Kg. 15: 27; 16:9, 16, 20 etc... similar to the revolt of Jehu: See 2 Kg.6:14; cf. Wolff H. W., *Joel and Amos*, Trans. Janzen, W., et alii (Hermeneia, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1977), pp. 305-316; Mays, James L., *Amos* (OT Library, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1969), pp. 133-140.

The conflict between Amaziah, the loyalist of kingship and Amos, the prophet of Yahweh, is much deeper than what it appears to be. Amaziah finds himself caught in a conflict over authority: on the one hand, the authority of the king which he upholds as legitimate, and on the other, the authority of the prophet of Yahweh, which Amos enjoys. If a messenger is the extension of the sender, e. g. the king, then the prophet is the extension of Yahweh who sent him. Amos brings this truth to the fore and shows that Amaziah's utterance is in direct opposition to Yahweh's mandate, and his action amounts to an unjust aggression on Yahweh's right to choose and send his messenger. Amos, by means of a "disputation speech" exposes Amaziah as a rebel against Yahweh, since he denies to Yahweh's messenger the right to speak at the place designated by Yahweh (Am. 7:14-15) [13].

Amos passes judgment on Amaziah and his family, and announces the punishments that await them: In the broader punishment of Israel's exile (v.17 end), Amaziah will be deprived, one by one, first, of his wife [14], secondly, of his sons and daughters, then of the fief awarded by the king to him by virtue of his cultic office and finally, of his own life and that in exile (Am. 7:16-17).

The spirituality of Amos amidst conflicts was anchored in his call which effected a complete relinquishing of all social and economic securities, and a total changing over to a condition of dependence upon Yahweh alone as the only security. This call implies and involves three things: "being taken" by Yahweh, a commission from Yahweh, and his own unwavering obedience to Yahweh (7:15). It is this conviction of the call that sustains the God-experience and God-consciousness of Amos in the thick of conflicts.

Jeremiah in conflict with deceptive prophecy

We shall limit our reflection on only one typical conflict in his ministry, i. e., a prophet in conflict with another prophet –

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13 Amos 7:16–17 reflects the literary form of "Disputation Speech". For an elaborate study of this literary form with examples from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Deutero-Isaiah, cf. Adrian Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People*: The Disputation Speech in the Prophets (Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1984: Anal. Bib. 104)

14 The fate of Amaziah's wife corresponds to the fulfilment of one of the treaty–curses, — thus there is the theology of Covenant underlying

Jeremiah in conflict with Hananiah (Jer. 28). Both Jeremiah from Anathoth (1:1) and Hananiah from Gibeon (28:1) are from the same territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Both of them claim also to prophesy in the name of Yahweh, and they prophesy in the house of Yahweh.

In socio-political terms, Hananiah represents the central prophecy as against the peripheral prophecy of Jeremiah[15]. From the way Hananiah boldly acts, we can see that he must have been supported by the palace and populace. Though there is a difference of opinion whether the event is factually historical or only theologically historical, we take it *as an historical event of conflict*. This conflict is reported in two variant forms: Jer. 27 – a first person narrative (Ich Bericht) and Jer. 28 – a third person account (Er Bericht).

The conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah was a clash of ideologies: the ideology of Hananiah ("Peace") and that of Jeremiah (Doom and war). Hananiah represents the anti-babylonian element in the Judean society. Hence he echoes in his oracle the expectations and sentiments of both palace politicians and the patriots among ordinary people. Jeremiah on the contrary represents the pro-Babylonian policy in Judah, which consists most probably of one single person – Jeremiah himself. His announcement both by word of mouth and by his prophetic action (27:2) foretells war and doom followed by exile and slavery. Jeremiah's word is, no doubt, anti-patriotic. Both the prophets claim to reveal the design of God in symbolic action (27:2 contrast 28:10) and in word (27:4ff; 28:13 contrast 28:2-4,11). Both are speaking in the presence of all the people (27:16; 28:1,5,11). The puzzle for everyone was: Who is speaking the word of God and who is not?

The confusion becomes still more critical when the theologies of the two opposing ideologies of the two prophets are given importance. Hananiah stands undoubtedly in the "Holy War" and

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15 Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (OT Library, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1986), cf. p. 541, is of different opinion. But see Wilson, R. R., *Sociological Approaches* (see note 1 above), pp. 77–79; Thompson, J, A., *The Book of Jeremiah* (W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980), pp. 537–541; Henri Mottu, "Jeremiah vs. Hananiah: Ideology and Truth in Old Testament Prophecy", *The Bible and Liberation* (cf. note 1 above), pp. 235–251.

"Mighty Acts" tradition of the God of liberation and proclaims Yahweh's war against Babylon (28:2-4, 10-11). His prophecy is deeply rooted immediately in the prophetic tradition of Isaiah (Is. 10:12-19) and ultimately in that of 2 Sam. 7:8-16, i. e., the eternal covenant with David's family. Hananiah's theological position implies the unconditional election of Davidic dynasty by God (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 132), and consequently the religion of a domesticated, if not enslaved, Yahweh who cannot go against his unconditional commitment. Jeremiah, however, is in the tradition of Mosaic prophecy and is rooted in deuteronomic theology of conditional election of David's house' and therefore the election is simply contingent. What happened to Shiloh and Samaria proves the point. Jeremiah's theological position implies the religion of God's freedom, i. e., Yahweh is free to do what he thinks best.

The polarization between Jeremiah and Hananiah can be observed in the following contrasts:

Hananiah	Jeremiah
Central prophet	Peripheral prophet
Jerusalemite theology of covenant	Deuteronomic theology of covenant
Unconditional election of David's line+commitment	Conditional election and commitment
Interests of the ruling class	Survival of the whole Judean people
Peace ideology	War ideology
Salvation prophecy (28:2-11) instigating revolt	Doom prophecy (27:12-22) counselling submission
Religion of domesticated or controlled God	Religion of the freedom of God

In the thinking of Jeremiah, Hananiah squared well with the Jerusalemite picture of what a prophet ought to be, who virtually denied freedom of action to Yahweh, and thus "uttered *rebellion*"[16] against the Lord (28:16). Hananiah was also guilty of making "this people trust in a lie" (28:15).

Jeremiah resolved this conflict in a way which is noteworthy. Vehement and aggressive though he usually was,

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16 The Heb. word *sārāh* in Jer. 28:16 is from the root *swr* and it means rebellion — in the sense of apostasy, defection: cf. Jer. 29:32; Is. 1:5; 31:6; Dt. 13:6

Jeremiah was very self-composed in this first conflictual encounter
with Hananiah (28:1-11). He tried to show that he was in the
line of ancient prophets who like him "prophesied war, famine
and pestilence". He was not speaking here as Yahweh's prophet
(note that the messenger formula is lacking), but as a represent-
ative of an ideology. He quoted the Deuteronomic criterion
Dt. 13:1-5, 18-22) for distinguishing true prophecy from the false
one. But when Hananiah tried aggressively to prove by a pro-
phetic action that he was right, "Jeremiah the prophet went his
way" (28:11) and waited for the word of the Lord to come. The
tension was released and the prophets withdrew.

Once the word of the Lord came, Jeremiah went to
Hananiah and accused him of having made the people trust in a
lie. That Hananiah is a liar, is a conclusion from the premise that
the Lord has not sent him. This conclusion was due to the
prophetic intuition of Jeremiah[17]. Jeremiah's prophetic intuition
saw in the political situation of 594/3 B.C. a contradiction between
the power – and wealth–seeking interests of the ruling class in
Judah and the well-being and survival of the whole people.
Jeremiah's *prophetic value judgment* arrives at this solution:
The well-being and survival of the whole Judean people should
by all means be safe-guarded and the common people must not
become victims of the political crisis. If so, the oppressive Judean
rulers should be removed from their position. For this, the ruling
politicians of Judah must accept Babylonian "yoke", under which
the common people will certainly survive and be renewed. This
is the will of Yahweh. Now, since Hananiah is against submission
to Babylon, Jeremiah argues, he cannot have been sent by
Yahweh. If he had not been sent by Yahweh, then he had usurped
the prophetic mission – hence he was guilty of false prophecy.
Hananiah is sentenced and his punishment will serve as an
historical criterion for the truthfulness of Jeremiah's prophecy.

The spirituality of Jeremiah is seen in his patient waiting
for the word of God in doubtful situation, and in his unwavering
obedience to the word when it finally arrives. *It is worth
emphasizing that the authenticity of the word of God is recog-
nized in connection with what is good for the "poor" and the
country and not for the ruling rich class.*

17 Cf. Henri Mottu, Art. cit. p. 236

Prophets amidst conflicts between
themselves and God

The prophets in the OT have always shown themselves as champions of God and of defenceless oppressed people. Obedience to God's call and commission, together with a very sharp sense of social justice and deep concern for others, marked their spirituality in the midst of conflicts.

But these spiritual men came also into an inner conflict deep down in their being, with the God who took hold of them. We shall briefly comment on two sets of somewhat parallel prophetic personalities who underwent such inner conflicts and came out of them as mature God-experienced men.

Moses and Jeremiah make the first pair of parallel personalities. Moses was called by God to be his prophet of liberation when the very existence of the Israelites was being threatened, while Jeremiah received his commission when the people of Israel were rushing headlong to national catastrophe. Both these men already in their first encounter with God at their call were caught in inner conflict and that is why they made excuses and placed objections (Comp. Ex. 3:11-4:17 with Jer. 1:4-19). It is the "human ego" of these prophets, knowing only too well the struggles and sufferings, expectations and frustrations involved in this ministry, which was in conflict with God. The "divine Other" offered assurance of assistance. The "prophetic ego", which felt with divine pathos for the people and wanted to intervene and act with the divine determination, was caught between the two. Eventually the "prophetic ego" in Moses and Jeremiah accepted the commission of God and became his messengers.

These two men are similar also in the fact that even after accepting their commission, they experienced, during their ministry, such inner conflicts between the human and the divine that every time they had to reaffirm their "Yes" to Yahweh (e. g. cf. Ex. 6:28-7:7; Num. 11:10-15; Jer. 15:10-21)[18]. This "Yes" was a true self-surrender.

Moses and Jeremiah were alike in the way that their ministry ended unfulfilled: Moses led the people *towards* the Promised Land, but himself he did not enter it. Jeremiah failed to convince his countrymen about the imminent catastrophe and call them to coversion. Nor did he live to see the restoration of the people of Israel, though he comforted and encouraged the exiles about the return. Indeed, the human self of Moses and of Jeremiah entered into oblivion (= death), but their prophetic self

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18   On Jeremiah's inner struggle and his spirituality, see John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah (Cambridge at the University Press, 1963), esp. pp. 201–230

emerged fully mature and remains dynamically active till today. This may be called the blossoming of their conflict spirituality – in other words, their resurrection.

The other two prophets who have some similarity in their conflict spirituality are Elijah and Jonah. One typical aspect of similarity is that their human self was so fed up with the prophetic ministry that they desired death and expressed it to God, the divine Other (See 1 Kg. 19:4; Jonah 4:1-3,8-9). Elijah was in the thick of battle with the king and the queen, and his human self took upper hand. The prophetic self was silent and reticent. But when the divine Other made a partial self-disclosure, by the energy of that theophany the prophetic self rose above the human. The vocation was renewed and the prophet returned with renovated vigour and dynamism, and a new programme of action (1 Kg. 19:15-18). Jonah's case is not exactly the same. He was reluctant (like Moses and Jeremiah) from the beginning to be the prophet of Yahweh (Jon. 1:3). Out of compulsion, he proclaimed the word of God (3:3). When he saw that his prophecy did not come true, he was angry with God (4:1,4,9). In other words Jonah did not want to be the God of freedom, but a God controlled by the prophetic porclamation in showing mercy or denying it (comp. Ex. 33:19). The silence of Jonah, which is implied in the abrupt ending of the book with God's rhetorical question leaves us to conclude that the propetic self of Jonah must have emerged out of the death-silence of his human self[19] and thus the prophet according to the heart of God lives even today.

Conclusion

From these few sample studies of OT prophets, we see that the prophetic ministry may serve as a paradigm of conflict spirituality. We may briefly formulate that spirituality as follows: The two dimensional commitment to covenant relationship permeates the decision of the prophets in the face of socio-political conflicts: i) the commitment to the other i. e., *the neighbour as covenant brother partner*; ii) the commitment to God, the transcendent Other in the covenant triangle. The commitment to the other is the sacramental sign of the commitment to the Other, i.e., God, and the efficaciousness of the sign is conferred by the faith of the prophets in God and his commission for them. The vertical commitment to God always prevails in conflicts between the human self and the divine Other. And that is expressed in self-surrender to God. This whole process constitutes the conflict spirituality, namely, growing in and with God-experience in and through conflictual situations.

A. Mariaselvam

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19 This silence is analogous to the silence and confession of Job at the final theophany, cf. Job 42:1–6

The Conflict Spirituality of Jesus

The author leads us into a glimpse of the vigorous spiritual personality of Jesus locked in conflict with the society of his times and its various systems. Particularly striking is the fact that the author notes about the conflicts Jesus had with his disciples, his own mother, and his very self, in fulfilling his mission and ministry.

Jesus and conflicts were like the two sides of the same coin. Conflict was his constant companion. The gospels, especially that of Mark, cast the whole public career of Jesus in a framework of disputes and confrontations[1].

The subsequent Christian generations have not often highlighted the conflict aspect of Jesus' life. The resurrection experience played such a determining role in the presentation of Jesus that some of the aspects of the historical Jesus remained out of focus[2]. A critical comparative study of the four gospels themselves can readily show this shift of emphasis. The gospel of Mark is often closer to the Jesus of history. The narrations in the other gospels are strikingly influenced by the ever growing Easter faith. The subsequent Christian thinking has carried this process further and made the historical Jesus more remote from us. The image of a "sweet Jesus" and a "gentle Jesus" has become very popular. Jesus' saying, "I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt. 11: 28) has been presented as the characteristic nature of Jesus. W. Harrington puts it rather strongly when he says, "A singular and tragic achievement of historical Christianity has been the effective *domestication of Jesus*"...[3]

Keeping this in mind, we shall try to discover who the historical Jesus was. We may have to rid ourselves of some of the preconceived notions about him. We shall not only study the texts of the gospels, but we shall also go beneath the texts and spell out their implications. In the emerging picture, we shall see a Jesus full of conflicts, a Jesus who faced conflicts and caused conflicts, a Jesus who believed that only through conflicts he can really reveal the Father and do His will.

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1   Cfr. J. C. Pallares, *A Poor Man Called Jesus* (New York 1986), 5
2   Cfr. W. Harrington,   *Jesus and Paul:Signs of Contradiction*   (Wilmington 1987), 13
3   op. cit. 16,

Jesus' conflict with the socio-religious set-up

Jesus' praxis was in dramatic opposition to the socio-religious set-up of his day. He associated freely with the "outcasts" of the society. He was friendly with the poor, the despised, the tax-collectors and whoever would constitute the "social garbage" of his day. He had table fellowship with them, and thus gave expression to his intimacy with them[4]. For the religious authorities, such a behaviour on the part of Jesus was unbelievable.

The women stood almost at the very bottom of the society. Jesus dealt with them with respect and dignity. He related to them as persons. He even admitted them to his entourage. This was unconventional. To say the least, it was apparently imprudent. Even his disciples were taken aback by surprise at Jacob's well (Jn 4.27). The disparaging words of Simon, the Pharisee, who had invited Jesus for dinner, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is, who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Lk 7:29) show the totally irreconcilable attitude of Jesus and that of the Pharisees towards women.

Jesus was a great friend of the *am-ha-arretz* (the people of the land). These are the simple and uneducated peasants. The religious leaders despised them. They ignored them as sinners, since they did not know the law[5]. The arrogant words of the pharisee: "But this crowd, who does not know the law, are accursed" (Jn 7:49) is highly presumptuous. Jesus responds by a categorical rejection of the so-called pious and takes an uncompromising stand for the "sinners": I have come to call sinners and not the self-righteous" (Mt 2:17).

Every word that Jesus uttered and every deed that he performed brought out clearly the great conflict between Jesus and the socio-religious set-up. Jesus' saying that "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine righteous persons" was totally unacceptable to them. It was outrageous on the part of Jesus to say that the prayer of the publican was heard and that the pharisee returned unjustified (Lk 18:9-14). They were horrified to see Jesus setting the despised Samaritan as a supreme model for love[6]. Thus the conflict between Jesus and the socio-religious set-up was there all the time, and it increased at every stage.

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4   Cfr E.Schillebeeckx, *Jesus an Experiment in Christology* (London 1979) 206ff

5   According to Mishnah Anhedrin 8:5, ignorance of the law was equivalent to sin. In contrast, the pious and the good ones are those who were schooled in the law (Cfr. Pirke Aboth 5:10–19).

6   Cfr. W. Harrington, op. cit. 92f

Jesus' conflict with the religio-political set-up

In the time of Jesus politics and religion went hand in hand. The religious authorities discharged several political functions. The highest religious authority of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, was vested with a lot of political power[7]. They had even the power of imposing capital punishment till about the time of Jesus. Jesus' scathing attack on the religious set-up was simultaneously an attack on the political set-up. His life, from the start to the finish, was a series of conflicts with the socio-political set-up.

The most virulent attack of Jesus was on the scribes and the pharisees. Jesus' outburst of passionate anger and blazing wrath against them in Mt 23 shows the height of the conflict between him and the religio-political authorities. The sevenfold "Woe to you" is terrible. Time and again, they are called "hypocrites", "blind guides", "blind fools", "whitewashed tombs", "serpents", "brood of vipers" and so on. In the gospel of John, Jesus accuses them of being "sons of the devil" (8:14). He tells them that they are blind (9:39-41). He calls them "thieves and robbers" (10:1,8). Such unsparing and sustained attacks and indictments reveal the intensity of the conflict between the religio-political authorities and Jesus.

Conflict with sacred religious institutions

Temple

Jesus was in direct conflict with the most sacred Jewish institution, the temple of Jerusalem. He rejected it as a place of worship. For him, it was not any more a house of God. On the contrary, it has become "a den of thieves" (Jer 7:11; Mk 11:17; Mt 21:13) and a "house of trade" (Zech 14:21; Jn 2:16). Thus it has no right to exist. It will be destroyed. But the new temple, not built with hands, will be raised up in three days (Jn 2:19). Thus Jesus was in total conflict with the institution of the temple and spoke publicly of its destruction.

The High Priest

Jesus was also in conflict with the High Priest, the supreme authority of the Jews. The incident of the temple cleansing could be understood as direct challenge to the High Priest. Animals were sold in the *hanuth* i. e., the market place. But Caiphas, the high priest, allowed new merchants to sell animals in the temple court itself to avenge himself on the merchants of the *hanuth* for having offered hospitality to his enemies[8]. This would have been an occasion for Caiphas to extort more money from the new

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7   The Sanhedrin had seventy members composed mostly of the Sadducees – the priestly aristocracy, the Elders – the lay nobility, and some Pharisees (as Nicodemus).

merchants[8]. Thus what was taking place in the temple was revenge and extortion. This made the temple into a den of thieves. Hence Jesus aflame with the prophetic passion, drives out all the buyers and sellers[9]. Hence the action of Jesus was an undoing of what the high priest had done. It was a clear disapproval and indictment of the high priest. The challenge that Jesus threw at the high priest deepened the conflict between them.

Law

No doubt Jesus as a Jew must have observed the Law. But, on several occasions, he did not hesitate to break it, though such an action caused great scandal. But whenever he broke the law, it was for the well-being of somebody or other[10]. Often he effected healings on sabbath days, though the law had forbidden such healings on sabbath. On such occasions, Jesus had consciously set aside the law, because the well-being of someone was at stake. For Jesus the observance of the tenets of the law was not the topmost priority, when faced with a pressing human need. He stated his option in categorical terms: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for sabbath" (Mk 2:27). Jesus' entirely different understanding and interpretation of the law intensified the conflict between him and the Jewish lawyers and leaders.

Conflict with the political forces

Jesus was clearly in conflict with the political forces of his day too. Here we are going to consider three main political forces: the Romans, Herod and Herodians, and the Zealots.

Romans

That Jesus was in direct conflict with the Roman power is evident from his political death. He was put to death by the Romans for high treason. In Lk 23:2, we see clearly the political tone of the accusations against Jesus. The gospels themselves give the impression as though the Jewish authorities were mostly to blame for the killing of Jesus[11], But to have Jesus out of the way must have been in the best interest of the Romans. Jesus' championing the cause of the oppressed was politically subversive, a serious threat to any authority that ruled through domination[12]. Hence the Romans, the oppresssive foreign rulers, who were known

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8   Cfr. V. Epstein, "The historicity of the gospel account of the cleansing of the temple" ZNW 55 (1964) 42–58

9   This understanding seems to be more meaningful. It is taking revenge and extortion which desecrated the temple rather than the material dirt and the noise of buying and selling that called for this prophetic action of Christ.

10 Cfr. E. A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus* (London 1990) 56.

11 In the gospel of Mark the responsibility for the killing of Jesus is shared both by the Romans and the Jewish authorities. But in the successive gospels Romans are gradually exonerated perhaps for fear of displeasing them.

12. Cfr. W. Harrington, op cit. 59

for their determination not to tolerate any threat to their power, could not let Jesus live[13].

An incident that sent shockwaves to the Romans must have been the events connected with the "palm sunday". All that happened that day had a clear political significance. The acclamation "Hosanna" could also be taken as a cry of "deliverance" or "liberation" (meaning: Please deliver or liberate us)[14]. The carrying of the palm leaves is clearly indicative of the Jewish nationalism (1 Mac 13:51; 2 Mac 10:7)[15]. The political significance of this event could not have escaped the attention of the ever watching Roman authority. Hence a swift action leading to the arrest of Jesus must have become necessary. All these go to show the real conflict that existed between Jesus and the Roman authority.

Herod and Herodians: Herod was a wicked man. John the Baptist had already indicted him severely for living with his brother's wife, Herodias (Mk 6:14-29). He was in severe conflict with Jesus too. The conflict was so serious that Herod decided to eliminate Jesus. Hence the Pharisees advise Jesus, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you" (Lk 13:31). Jesus' answer too is indicative of this conflict, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I finish my course (Lk 13:32). The Herodians, the loyalists of the Herod family, were also out to discredit and destroy him. They appear only twice in the gospels: Mk 3:6 and 12:13. In Mk 12:13; they attempt to trap Jesus and in 3:6, they hold counsel with the Pharisees to destroy him. Thus the conflict with the Herodians was a serious threat to the life of Jesus.

Zealots: Jesus was in direct confrontation with the ideal of the Zealots[16]. What the zealots attempted was the establishment of a nationalistic, theocratic state. They were only interested in expelling the Romans. But for Jesus this alone does not solve the problem. This would just result in a change of government. The new government would be spending all its energies on the law, the traditions and the religious institutions. It would be a kind of extreme right, "fascist"[17], government. And this government would be more oppressive than the Roman government itself[18]. Certainly Jesus could not favour such a political philosophy.

What Jesus wanted was not a change of government. He wanted to introduce a new order of thinking, acting and living,

13 Cfr. A. Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity* (London 1987) 127ff.

14 Cfr. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I* (New York 1966) 457.

15 In the Testament of Levi 4, the palm branches are given to Levi as a sym bol of power. Cfr also W.R. Farmer, 'The Palm Branches in Jn 12:13' JTS 3 ('52) 62-66

16 Zealots were the nationalists who were conducting guerilla warfare against Romans. Jesus had disciples who were zealots (Simon — Lk 6:15:Acts 1:13).

17. Cfr. J. M. Bonino, *Faces of Jesus* (New York 1984) 117,

18 Cfr. A. Nolan, op. cit. 95.

based on the equality of all human persons, flowing from the fact that all are God's children. This, he called, the kingdom of God. The zealots who initially hoped that Jesus would take up their cause were disappointed. In despair Judas betrayed him[19] and the crowd chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. Thus Jesus, all through his life, was in severe conflict with the political forces of his day.

Jesus' conflict with his disciples

Often large crowds went after Jesus. Some had followed him out of curiosity. Some others were there to find fault with him. There were also several others, men and women, who became his genuine followers. The disciples were with Jesus. They followed him wherever he went. Thus there developed a genuine relationship between them and Jesus.

Disciples: Yet, at times, conflicts between them and Jesus could not be avoided. Jn 6 vividly portrays a conflict between Jesus and the disciples. When Jesus said that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood (vv 52-59), it offended them. They said, "It is a hard saying! Who can listen to it (v 60). "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (v 66). The conflict was so intense that there was a schism!

James and John: They seem to have shared the hope of the zealots that the Romans would be defeated, and that Jerusalem would be liberated. These Zebedean brothers would have thought that Jesus would do it. This is reflected in the request of their mother: "Grant them to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (Mk 13:37). "In your glory" would mean "when you gloriously reign in Jerusalem after conquering it."[20] Jesus categorically rejects their demand and tells them that they have clearly misunderstood his mission (Mk 10:38-40).

Peter: Not on all issues could Peter and Jesus see eye to eye. Peter's expectations of Jesus, were, at least in an earlier phase of his life, something similar to that of the zealots. He would have expected Jesus to liberate Jerusalem from the Roman occupation. The ever increasing number of the followers of Jesus would fight for him. They could easily defeat the Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem[21]. That is why when Jesus spoke of suffering and dying in Jerusalem (Mk 8:31 par), he strongly objected to it. Mark says that "Peter took him and began to rebuke him" (8:32). The conflicting expectations came to the fore. But Jesus, in turn rebuked Peter and used a very harsh language saying, "Get behind

19. Cfr. J. M. Bonino, op. cit. 19.
20 Cfr. H. S. Schubert, "Biblical criticism criticised: With reference to the Marcan report of Jesus' examination before the Sanhedrin", in E. Bammel – C. F. D. Moule ed. (Cambridge 1984) 394f; Cfr also C. Hieronymus, "Jesus and the Extremists of his times" (Tamil), *Marai Aruvi* 6 (1982,4) 6f.
21 Cfr. H. Schubert, art. cit. 394f; A. Nolan, op.cit. 109; C. Hieronymus, art. cit. 6

me Satan. For you are not on the side of God, but of men (Mk
8:33). Jesus sees Peter as tempting him as the crowds (Jn 6:15)
and the devil (Mk 4:8-10) did earlier.

Judas Iscariot: Though there were several conflicts between Jesus
and the disciples, only that with Judas Iscariot had a tragic end.
Judas, as said earlier, probably was a member of the sicarii faction
of the zealots. He expected of Jesus a zealot type Messiah and was
slowly getting disappointed. With his handing him over to the Je-
wish authorities and the subsequent condemnation of Jesus to death
it became a total despair[22] and ended up with his hanging himself.

Jesus' conflict with his mother and the relatives

Conflict arose with his immediate relatives and with his
mother. The expectations and interests of his relatives were dif-
ferent from those of Jesus himself. This is already clear in Lk
2:41-51. Jesus stayed back in the temple. When Mary and
Joseph found him after an anxious search, Jesus coolly asked
them: "How is that you sought me? Did you not know that I must
be in my Father's house? (v 49). His question is indicative of the
conflict between their understanding of what Jesus should do.

A woman from the crowd once raised her voice and said,
"Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that you sucked
(Lk 11:27). She thought that the blood relationship of being a
mother is a blessedness. But Jesus confronts and corrects her
view. He tells her, "Blessed rather are those who hear the
Word of God and keep it" (Lk 11:28). Thus in the thinking of
Jesus the blessedness is not the result of any blood relationship;
the real blessedness comes from hearing the Word of God and
keeping it[23].

The real conflict between Jesus and his mother and brothers
comes out in Mk 3:31-35. Jesus' family was deeply worried about
all that people were saying about Jesus. Some were saying that
he was beside himself (Mk 3:21). Others were saying that he was
possessed by devil and that by the head of the devil, Beelzebub
(Mk 3:22). The mother and the brothers of Jesus were pained at
hearing all these. They would not like such talks about Jesus to
spread further. Hence first the relatives came to take Jesus
home, if needed, by force[24]. Later, the brothers of Jesus and his
mother herself appeal to him to go home with them. His brothers,
even his mother, have badly misunderstood him. They are

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22 H. Schubert art. cit. 395 thinks that "Judas, by betraying, wished to force
a confrontation in which Jesus would only prove victorious". But he was
unprepared to what really happened and hence hanged himself.

23 Cfr R.E. Brown et alii (ed), *Mary in the New Testament* (Bangalore '79) 172.

24 In Mk 3:21, Jesus' relatives are said to go to "arrest" (kratenai) Jesus. They
knew that he would not come on his own. But their effort must have failed
because of those who sat around Jesus (Mk 3:31).

judging by worldly standards and values. They are still "away" from him. They remain still "outside" (v 31). Those who are his own are those who sat around him. These are Jesus' brothers and the mother. The brothers and mother by blood relationship are still "outside". They do not yet belong to him. Hence they have yet to be his real brothers and mother. Thus the conflict has ended in a rejection of Jesus' relatives, including his mother[25]. Of course, later, his mother would become the greatest disciple and thus mother, not just by blood relationship, but in a very real way, by listening to God's Word and keeping it.

Jesus' conflict within himself

As we have seen upto now, Jesus had several conflicts with the socio-political and religious forces of his day. He had conflicts also with the disciples and with his kith and kin. Over and above all these, he had a lot of conflicts within himself.

In his twenties, he must have had severe conflicts with the ritualistic, legalistic, rigid and complex religion of his times. He had many questions, but his religion could hardly give any answer. The authorities were uncomfortable with his questions. Several religious rites and practices were becoming increasingly meaningless to Jesus[26]. At this time, Jesus hears of a certain John who was telling people in the Judean desert how to lead a life pleasing to God. His words were impressive and meaningful. He exhorted the people to repent, and baptised them. Jesus who was already seeking intensely for God's ways, found himself irresistibly attracted to John. He listened to him, allowed himself to be baptised by him (Mk 1:9-11) and was, in a way, his disciple[27]. The conflict with his traditional religion deepened. It was at the time of baptism by John that Jesus had his Abba experience which became the dynamic force in him for all that he did.

The whole public life of Jesus, as we have seen above, was full of conflicts. Whatever he said or did created conflicts not only with others, but within himself as well. Whenever he made a scathing attack on the priesthood or the temple etc. or when he broke the sabbath law, it hurt him too. At times he began to doubt whether he was right in attacking the age old institutions Could he be perhaps a trouble-maker and blasphemer as alleged by his opponents ? Thus there was great conflict in him. In the moment of crisis, he turned to his God. He spent nights in prayer. He discerned God's will and went on his way with the strength he received in prayer. He developed deep friendship with several people. Some of the women too were very close to him. If he considered marriage, it must have been the most natural thing. Marriage was a social obligation. It had a religious dimension too. It was

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25 Cfr. R. E. Brown et alii. op. cit. 54–59; F. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (New York 1981) 118.
26 Cfr T. N. Hart, *To Know and Follow Jesus* (New York 1984) 70f.
27 Cfr W. Harrington, op. cit. 11; E. Schillebeeckx, op. cit. 136f.

participating in the creative activity of God. Hence all were expected to marry. Avoiding marriage was seen as an escapism and leading to egoism[28]. Remaining single was even thought of as a punishment (Jer 16:1-9). Thus Jesus might have, at a certain stage of his life, thought of marriage for himself. Yet on reflecting further and struggling through prayer, he chose to remain single. His ministry was so all-absorbing that he would have little time to devote to the family (Mk 3:7-12, 20). Besides, he had aroused such a public opposition, that he could be killed at any time[29]. Thus he overcame this internal conflict too.

The conflict within Jesus reached the climax at the cross. He was alone, betrayed, forsaken and in terrible agony. He always trusted God; he was in constant touch with Him in prayer and he took decisions only after discerning His will in prayer. And now, where is that God? Why is He far away? What made Him to be so indifferent? Has He too abandoned him? In utter anguish, he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mk 14:33-34). Thus at the moment of the greatest internal conflict the words of the psalmist (22:1) came to his help and channelised his outpouring of anguish and turned it into a prayer.

The conflict spirituality of Jesus

Thus conflict encompassed Jesus' life fully. As it is clear by now, Jesus had a number of conflicts on a number of occasions with a number of people. These conflicts were not thrust upon Jesus from outside. Nor did they come to his life 'per accident". The conflicts in the life of Jesus were the direct consequence of his teaching and praxis. They could not be avoided. Neither did Jesus ever try to avoid them; nor was he ever afraid of them. He had no fear of creating scandals or losing reputation, even his life itself. He was courageous and uncompromising. His conflicts led to his death on the cross.

The conflicts did not distract Jesus from his mission. Rather his mission was carried out in and through these conflicts. They were the powerful vehicle of communicating his message. They were needed for his mission. That is why often Jesus himself was the cause for them. When ordinary modes of communication were inadequate in the context of the hardhearted leaders and rigid religious structures, he needed this 'conflict language'. In and through it he communicated God's will to the people and revealed the fatherly nature of God. In this way he fulfilled his mission. This is how he was faithful to the Spirit of God who annointed him for his mission. Thus conflicts formed an integral part of Jesus' spirituality.

Hieronymus Cruz

28 Cfr Hieronymus Cruz, *Christological Motives and the Motivated Actions in Pauline Paraenesis* (Frankfurt 1990) 222.

29 Cfr T. N. Hart, op. cit. 72f.

New Spiritual Foundations for a World in Conflict

Some Macro Perspectives

As a fitting conclusion to the different contributions in this Issue, the author reflects on the new spiritual foundations required in today's world of conflicts. Today's spirituality should be dialogic, collective, justice-centred, plurality-conscious and lastly directed not only subjectively to the other but also objectively by the presence and reality of the experience of the other.

It may be a surprise but a fact that this last part of the twentieth century is witnessing an unprecedented universal spiritual regeneration. Within Christianity, for example, it is enough to think of the emergence of rightist spiritual renewal groups and the proliferation of sects, charismatic and pentecostal movements etc. The matrix of this renewal is either fundamentalism or a kind of ecstatic millenarianism. As such, there is the tendency to see spirituality identified with the restoration of the traditional in one's religion, or with an ethereal world of zeal and emotions.

Such spiritual renewals, unfortunately, do not allow any effective encounter with the realities of our world marked by ever sharpening conflicts and contradictions. And yet the future of our world and its spiritual contour will depend upon how we approach conflicts in various realms of life. There is then an urgent necessity for a spirituality in whose texture the incontrovertible reality of conflicts in our world will be present.

Within the limits of the space still available in this issue, I would like to briefly point out four areas which to my mind represent potential sources of conflict. The nature of these conflicts indicates also the nature of spirituality which the human family requires today for its life and growth. The second part of the article will reflect on this latter point.

I

The collapse of a scaffolding

Democracy as a scaffolding to support the construction of human communities in justice, participation and mutuality is just now collapsing. What the modern world accepted as an unquestionable universal system of governance — democracy — has paradoxically turned out to be a major source of conflicts today. The assault on democracy and the ensuing conflicts, as I see,

originate from three directions. First of all, there is the discrepancy between the traditional forms of governance in many societies (specially of the Third World) and the system of modern democratic polity. It has resulted in the exploitation of the system and even forcible capturing of it to affirm the old dominations and loyalties. The endemic tribalism in Sub-Saharan Africa[1] and mixing up of caste in politics in South Asia can be considered as examples of this.

A second assault is the one that is inflicted by the fascist, fundamentalist and anti-secular forces. In the name of religious faith they try to establish a mode of narrow pseudo-nationalistic or theocratic form of governance which will practically reduce the minority groups to silence and mortify the poor and the weaker sections of the society. The third danger is from modernity, its advanced industrialization and monopoly capitalism. Contrary to the general belief, the modern industrialization has not served the cause of democracy; on the contrary, I believe, it is one of the principal causes of its degeneration. Democratic institutions and their functioning are de-routed to self-serving goals of big industrialists, businessmen and landlords. In short, a general conflict is on for appropriating the democratic system to serve vested interests.

A champagne glass

The most recently published report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presents graphically in the form of a champagne glass the world situation[2]. The wide top of the glass represented by twenty per cent of the world population today appropriates to itself 82.7% of the world income, while the lowest twenty percent represented by the slim stem, has just 1.4%. of the world income. At no point of time in the history of humanity such wide disparity existed.

Such disconcerting state of affairs is an explosive situation of macro level conflicts as well as ammunition for the eruption of social unrest at the micro level. The promises made to the poor of creating a more egalitarian society through increase of production has turned out to be a mirage. The long and patient awaiting of the poor with expectation of change in their situation today has come to a point where the poor have become more than convinced that their dreams will never come true; as even the hope which was their only strength is flickering to die, it has become clear to them that if anything should change, a more radical path is called for. And that is lending sharp teeth to ever growing conflicts. And this is most evident among the disillusioned youth from the poorest sections of the society.

1   Cfr Mahmood Mamdani, 'Africa: Democratic Theory and Democratic Struggles., in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay, Oct. 10, 1992, pp. 2228–2232.

2   *Human Development Report 1992*, Oxford University Press, NY–Oxford 1992.

In the economic field itself there is another master originator of conflicts — the market. With ever more nations — including giant India and China — joining the bandwagon of the present economic world-system (saying good-by to the ideals of self-reliance and social welfare of yester years); with the competition to gain markets and with economic protectionism, an enormous potential of world conflict is set in fermentation. Such conflicts have already arisen even among the winners of the present world who otherwise stand together to gain from the victim nations of our globe. Thus we have simmering conflicts between the European Economic Market and the U.S.A., between U.S.A. and Japan, and within the nations of the "fortress Europe" itself. This global and macro situation is reflected back on the everyday micro level experiences, trade and transactions in the form of economic rivalries and violence among the various ethnic, religious, linguistic and caste groups.

A new conflagration

Equality of all human beings, independent of the race, colour or religion to which one belongs, has been the bedrock of the U. N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some years ago the borders of the countries were the sensitive focus, since they were the hot-spots of potential eruption of violent conflicts. But today there has taken place a shift. New borders of conflicts are drawn along ethnic lines, and these borders are often within the same nation. Racists and communalists are the new Neros who set our world in a general conflagration; the fire envelops and they play the fiddle of their own imbecility. Ethnic conflict is today not something pertaining to different African tribes or to Indian castes; it is as much a phenomenon of the First World itself.

What is still worse is that the gross economic disparity between the rich and the poor nations is assuming a dangerous racist turn. It is this disparity that storms at the doors of Western protectionism in the form of immigrants. Against them the demon of racism is let loose. (Something does not become racism only when the Jews are affected!) The basest forms of racism are today directed against the poor and defenseless immigrants from the Third World.

The ultimate root of this open outburst of racism and ethnic discrimination today is the fear and frenzy of the elites as well as of the middle-class in the face of the threats and challenges to their domination. This is true at all levels of racist manifestation, be it the revision of immigration policies in the West or the opposition and resistance to the Mandal issue in India[3].

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3   The acceleration of Mandir–Masjid conflict in Ayodhya (culminating in the events of black Sunday of 6 December, 1992) cannot be understood except as a reaction to the threat and challenge represented by the Mandal move-

A cage of confinement

A fourth source of conflict stems from the opposition between a totalizing universality and a vibrant particularity. Universalization is a dangerous weapon by which the plurality in our world is flattened to allow the dominators and winners of the world to continue their hegemony. The totalizing universality could be a constricting system of thought or ideology – religious or secular – which does not permit anything to exist legitimately outside the confines of itself. It could be a fascist political system, a global monolithic coca-cola culture, or a world system of economy. The totalizing thought-pattern or mode of action often feeds on myth. It could be the myth of the "perennial Aryans"[4] today claiming to (re)establish a universal, Akanta Bharat, no matter at what cost of the poor; or it could be the much-abused myth of "new world order". There is no room for plurality and diversity. Its claim of universality is nothing but a cage into which it wants to imprison the inexhaustible plurality of our world to be able to control and dominate it.

On the other pole is the reality and experience of the particular with its irreducible and unique features defying all reductionist categorization. It is in this particularity that life pulsates. The force of life manifests today in the particular and it challenges the *rigor mortis* — the rigour of death — of all totalizing systems, institutions, powers and dominations. It is the many feeble voices of the particular which is becoming a thundering wave, sharpening the already existing conflicts and contradictions.

II

It is to this world of conflict and polarization that any germane spirituality has to respond. Alienating as it has been, much of the spirituality proposed by the various religious traditions is not able to come to terms with these fundamental experiences of conflicts in our times. Without going into the inner nature of the spirituality which our world badly needs, let me propose here some of the characteristics of the type of spiritual foundation we require today.

Dialogic

Spirituality is not a state but a process of growth through the depth awareness of the reality in its totality – human, divine and cosmic, as well as *conscious participation* in it. Since the conflict that is taking place in our society conditions our awareness of and participation in the divine and nature, spirituality calls for an appropriate response to the existing socio-political conflicts and

ment. For the various aspects of this conflict, cfr S arvepalli Gopal (ed.), *Anatomy of a Confrontation. The Babri Masjid-R amajanmabhumi Issue*, Viking, Delhi 1991.

4   Cfr Romila Thapar, 'The Perennial Aryans', in *Seminar*, Dec. 1993, pp. 20–24.

contradictions. And this response is nothing but dialogue. The focus of this dialogue, however, is not the devising of schemes for the resolution of conflicts (which would be simply an instrumentalization of both dialogue and spirituality), but the process of growth and discovery of truth in the thick of the conflicts and contradictions through the practice of continuing dialogue. Dialogue is the process of churning, through which the spiritual cream is allowed to emerge from out of the conflicts. The conflicts themselves are a kind of catharsis for the emergence of truth which we should turn into the foundation of our spiritual existence.

A dialogic spirituality creates the atmosphere for mutuality, participation and freedom, which is the spiritual core of democracy. What kind of democracy is it that does not, for example, allow any effective power or participation to the dalits in India, to the Afro-Americans in the United States and to the immigrants in Europe? The tragedy of our present world is that we have created systems and institutions with democratic labels, but have failed to develop a dialogical foundation that would sustain them, and lead them to the realization of their professed goals and ideals.

Collective

What has been said about the dialogical spiritual foundation leads us to a second feature — the collective character of spirituality. First of all the conflicts are not realities simply lived out in the inner sanctuary of an individual as part of his or her private spiritual history. Such individualist spirituality, though experiencing conflicts interiorly, could be nevertheless indifferent to the arena of socio-political history and its struggles, conflicts and contradictions. The demand of the times is to live a collective spirituality by which we jointly bear responsibility for our world, our society, our milieu — a responsibility that will seek also ways and means to jointly resolve conflicts.

The new spiritual foundation will be collective also in a different but related sense. It stands in contradistinction to a kind of elitist spirituality. This type of spirituality tends to conveniently overlook the gruesome socio-political history and take refuge in pious platitudes and mantras. The new spiritual foundation our world requires should be based on the experiences of people as a collective entity. It will be a spirituality born out of collective involvement of the people, the poor, the victims of history as they struggle and face conflicts.

Justice-centered

In the traditional spirituality, justice remained no more than a foot-note. Since underlying most conflicts in our world, is the reality of unjust deprivations, we need today a spirituality that is sharply sensitive to the issues of justice. It is the acid-test of authentic spirituality. For most people, shanti – peace – is the

hall-mark of spirituality; today the emphasis should shift from peace to justice in such a way that in our spiritual vision, attitude and praxis, peace becomes really the fruit of justice — *opus justitiae pax.*

A justice-centered spirituality will necessarily be also a change-oriented spirituality. It is such a spirituality that will find in the conflicts the opportunity to transform the existing order of things.

Plurality-conscious

What is meant here is not different types, traditions and schools of spirituality. Rather, by plurality-conscious is intended the dimension of our spirituality which would make it vibrate and positively respond to the diversity, the plurality of our world at all levels. Our world is today given over to the monolithic and fascist temptation of steamrolling all differences, causing conflicts. A spirituality responding to this situation cannot but be one which accommodates plurality, values and appreciates it as a great enrichment.

Other-directed

I mean other-directed in two inter-related senses. First, the new spirituality should subjectively tend, direct itself towards the other; secondly, it should be objectively directed by the presence and the reality of the experience of the other. A world in which "hell is the other" (Sartre), the Hobbesian *homo homini lupus* (one man is wolf to another man) will be the order of the day. Our modern world which has reached global extension, is one in which the other is eclipsed or turned into an enemy. And yet the other is the source for our experience of being, freedom, truth, love and wisdom, and indeed the Divine. Therefore, the new spiritual foundation for our divided world will have the other as its focus.

Conclusion

The inadequacy of the traditional spiritual orientations and means has become evident today in our world where "good", "holy" and "religious" men and women abound, and yet this very world is being turned into a threshing floor where the poor, the victims, the innocent continue to profusely bleed, as never before. In the face of the conflicts in our world, every religious tradition is demanded by the very necessity of the situation to re-examine its spirituality and re-define it. Some of the characteristics of the new spirituality which we have seen above should be consciously absorbed and turned into part and parcel of the very marrow of these religious traditions. They should be the foundation for an authentic spiritual regeneration of the religions. It is through such regeneration that religions will contribute to the flourishing of life, and at the same time, guard themselves against spiritual atrophy and sclerosis.

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